



Blues News On-Line

www.umpiring.softball.org.au

Edition November 2009

National UIC's Call with Tricia Sibraa

Softball Australia Umpire Program established Blues News On-line in July 2001, and has produced 80 editions over the last eight years, which is not a bad average considering all aspects of producing this great publication is by volunteers. In the near future, the National Umpire Program will be asking all our readers to participate in a survey on BNOL. We want to ask you our readers to see if you are happy with the structure and content and if there are ways that we can improve BNOL to meet your needs. We have endeavoured over the years to try to make BNOL informative, easy to read and enjoyable. Details will be provided in the next issue of BNOL.

Softball Australia Awards of Excellence

The Softball Australia Awards of Excellence dinner was recently held and it gives me great pleasure to announce that Diane Waller, (Victoria) and Darren Sibraa (Queensland) were announced joint recipients of the Vivienne Triplett Umpire of the Year for 2009. Congratulations are extended to both umpires.

Also announced at the dinner were the Softball Australia LTD Level 7 and 8 awards. Sue Itzstein and Scott Rindfleish (New South Wales), and Darren Sibraa awarded level 7, while Neville Lawrance, Damien McCauley (South Australia), Diane Waller, Debbie Grove and Leigh Evans were all awarded their Level 8. Read more about these awards later in this edition.

Outcomes from ISF Congress

Softball Australia has recently had the following players and umpires inducted into the ISF Hall of Fame, Peter Clout, Sally McCreedy, and John McAuliffe.

ISF also announced that the IX Junior Men's World Championships in 2012 will be played at Parana, Argentina and the XIII Men's World Championship in 2013 be held at North Shore City, New Zealand.

A total of 65 rules change proposals were submitted to the 2009 ISF Congress Playing Rules Commission for consideration and of these, 11 were withdrawn, 10 were rejected, 25 were approved and 15 approved with an amendment and 4 proposals referred to the ISF Technical Code. Leigh Evans, our Umpire in Chief - Technical has been working to create a Technical Bulletin explaining the changes that will take effect from 1st January 2010. The Technical Bulletin will be published in December and placed on our website.

Papua New Guinea Softball Association has selected Peter Chalapan and Tony Simitap to attend the Australian Under 16 Girl's and Boy's Championship in January. This is a very important step forward for PNG and Oceania umpiring. We are all only going to be better off for this experience. An exchange program between Australia and New Zealand is now in its 17th year and umpiring in both countries has advanced measurably over this time.

Upcoming Events for November and December 2009

Tasmania Open Women & Under 16 Girl's Championships, Ulverstone, 21-22 November

National Primary School Championships, Redlands, 22-27 November

Queensland Open Men's State Championship, Toowoomba, 27-29 November

Canberra Skins, Hawker, ACT, 4-6 December

Victorian Under 16 Girl's & Under 16 Boy's State Championships, Fawkner Park, South Yarra, 5-6 December 2009

Gilley's Shield Round 2, Melbourne, 11-13 December

Tasmania Under 19 Women & Under 19 Men State Championships, Hobart, 12-13 December

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New South Wales

www.nswumpires.softball.org.au

2009 U12 State Championships - Macarthur District Softball Association

By Leanne Gearside (Tournament UIC)

The U12 State Championships were held at Macarthur District Softball Association on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 October 2009.

Once again, umpires came together and performed well at a state championship, friendships were renewed and new friends were made. The city and country folk came together and umpired as one team.

The UIC for the championship was Leanne Gearside, assisted by Col Davis and Sharyn Girdler. Feedback was provided to all umpires throughout the championships, with the management crew assisted by Vicki Lansley and Scott Rindfleish in delivering feedback.

A total of 46 umpires attended the championships, covering approximately 58 games. The fourth umpire system was used for the purpose of recording the changes on the cards, which appeared to work effectively, reducing the pressure on the less experienced umpires in making changes during the game. The junior umpires were also given the opportunity to learn how to make changes on the card with less pressure and time constraints.



Manly and Wagga Wagga fought it out for the girl's title, with Manly taking the State Championship 7-3. Well done to the umpires appointed to the girl's

Grand Final for 2009: Sue Allison (P), Melissa Wallace (1st) and Kristina Travers (3rd). Pictured above.

Macarthur and Georges River battled it out in the boy's Grand Final, with Macarthur taking the win 15-3.

Congratulations to the umpiring crew: Robert McIntosh (P), Dermot O'Daly (1st) and Craig Myers (3rd) Pictured left.



Congratulations should be extended to all umpires who performed to the best of their ability at the championships. We thank you for your time and commitment to servicing the game of softball and look forward to seeing you at the 2010 U12 State Championships!

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New South Wales

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World Masters Games - Sydney 2009 By Jesse Smith

The 2009 World Masters Games were played across four Sydney venues from 11 - 18 October 2009. Blacktown Olympic Park, Kelso Park Softball Complex, Jacque Osmond Softball Centre and Milton Park Softball Complex played host to hundreds of softballers from all over Australia and the world. Similarly, umpires from all over Australia and the world descended on Sydney to participate in the biggest sporting event held in Australia since the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

Umpiring softball provides all umpires with a unique opportunity to experience new things. The 2009 World Masters Games certainly provided such an environment. When describing their experience, one umpire reflected that 'having the opportunity to umpire teams from other countries was an absolute honour.'

Other umpires described their experience as being 'enriching' given the 'high quality games and standard of umpiring,' as well as 'unique because you had the opportunity to work with teams and umpires from overseas who were participating simply because they loved the game!'

Many umpires also had the opportunity to learn and develop their skills throughout the Games. The overwhelming response from umpires regarding 'what they learned' was that softball umpiring is a 'universal language.' 'You can understand people from all over the world,' one umpire noted.

The general feeling was accurately summed up by one crew member in particular: 'We can converse on and off the diamond with other umpires from around the globe because we all do the same rotations, signals, angles and calling of balls and strikes. It feels as though we have mastered a universal language and called it umpiring, knowing that we all do it at different levels.'

Networking and meeting new people are but two of the many benefits umpiring softball can bring. World Masters, with its international appeal, certainly allowed for this to occur. For those umpires who have only recently donned the blue uniform, World Masters was an exciting time for them to meet new people.

'The interstate and overseas umpires were warm and charming; they were only too happy to share their experiences in umpiring; they were also quite open in asking questions and wanting to absorb any useful information,' one crew member said.

It is therefore quite evident that a lot of umpires truly benefited from, and thoroughly enjoyed, their time in Sydney. It would be remiss not to mention the many off-diamond 'social' activities that were held throughout the event, with some umpires noting these events as 'memorable,' even though they may not have been able to fully recall every detail of their night!

Memorable moments were had by all umpires, whether it was being appointed to a medal match, receiving good feedback from a senior umpire, or meeting a new friend from abroad. Many umpires will be looking forward to the next World Masters in Italy and will undoubtedly look back at their experience in Sydney with fond memories.





New South Wales

www.nswumpires.softball.org.au

Congratulations to the following umpires appointed to Gold Medal matches across the various divisions and grades:

Division	Plate Umpire	1 st Base Umpire	3 rd Base Umpire
35B Women	Yvonne Kahler (QLD)	Jessica Eastcott (NSW)	Bruce McKendrick (NSW)
35A Men	Ron Trow (QLD)	Peter Baker (WA)	Evan Kaddatz (WA)
35B Men	Andrew Rindfleish (NSW)	Greg Andrews (CAN) Jennifer Keller (CAN)	Arnie Astring (CAN)
35C Men	Ron Mills (WA)	John Murdoch (CAN)	Brian Higinbotham (NSW)
45A Women	Sally Crawford (QLD)	Rebekha Pearson (ACT)	James Townsend (NSW)
45B Women	Cathy Allen (NT)	Jim Long (NSW)	Jeff Trevena (NSW)
45C Women	Bob Jones (NZ)	Lyn Moncaster (NSW)	Tony Moncaster (NSW)
45A Men	Stuart Tyler (VIC)	Christiann Zaiter (NSW)	Craig Myers (NSW)
45B Men	Ian Goodman (QLD)	Nick Edwards (NSW)	Rhonda Rowe (VIC)
45C Men	Mark Gallagher (ACT)	Daphne Bickle (QLD)	Albert Dumareq (WA)
Exhibition	Garry Grimes (NSW)	Melissa Wallace (NSW)	Jacqui Robar (NSW)



Some of the crew who officiated at the World Masters

It is important to extend a big thank you to the following people for their hard work in organising umpires, allocating umpires to games and ensuring that the administration and logistical sides of the Games ran smoothly: Sue Itzstein (Technical Delegate), Vicki Lansley (SNSWUA Secretary & TCU), Bruce McCahon (TCU), Scott Rindfleish (TCU), Amanda Houison (TCU), Ron Houison (TCU) and Cathy Kerr (Softball NSW General Manager).

In addition, thank you and congratulations to all umpires who participated and assisted in making the 2009 World Masters Games a positive experience for all. Your time, dedication and cooperation were greatly appreciated! We look forward to seeing many of you in Italy in 2013.



Queensland

www.umpires.qld.softball.org.au

Busy time for Queenslanders by Trevor Pascall

Queensland has recently held a number of 2009 State Championships. Highlights of all these championships were the number of successful candidates.

Successful candidates

Very pleasingly, the following candidates were successful in advancing their accreditation levels through out the 2009 State Championships

- Level 4 accreditation - Sally Crawford (Brisbane).
- Level 3 accreditation - Jesse Bullock (Noosa), Thomas Rivers (Wynnum), Kevin Woodbury (Caboolture), Stuart Fort (Brisbane), Janelle Hicks (Brisbane), Tina Thorburn (Maryborough), Keith Thorburn (Maryborough) and Kim Timmomen (Mount Isa)
- Level 2 accreditation - Vicienne Crane (Logan City).

Congratulations to you all for your hard work and achievements.

With the number of championships come a number of umpires rewarded for their commitment and hard work during their respective round robin games.

Congratulations to the following umpires for their grand final allocations.

Queensland Cup & Open Women's State Championships

4-6 September 2009 at Redlands

Queensland Cup

Plate David Casey, 1st base Helen Strauss, 2nd base Jana McCaskill, 3rd base Yvonne Kahler

Open Championship

Plate Ian Frame, 1st base Ron Trow, 2nd base Norelle Thomas, 3rd base Ian Goodman

President's Cup

Plate Danny Griffiths, 1st base Natalie Fresser, 2nd base Peter Walsh, 3rd base Bill Buckley

Under 16 Boy's State Championships

19-21 September 2009 at Caboolture

State Championship

Plate Jana McCaskill, 1st base David Casey, 3rd base Ian Frame

President's Cup

Plate Danny Griffiths, 1st base Ian Bunston, 3rd base Brian Macpherson

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Queensland

www.umpires.qld.softball.org.au

Under 16 Girl's State Championships

19-21 September 2009 at Brisbane

Championship game

Plate Norelle Thomas, 1st base Stephen Gutteridge, 3rd base Ian Goodman

President's Cup.

Plate Tina Thorburn, 1st base Morton Ward, 3rd base Neville Baggow

Under 19 Men's State Championships

2-4 October 2009 at Noosa

Queensland Cup

Plate Darren Sibraa, 1st base Helen Strauss, 3rd base David Casey

President's Cup

Plate Danny Griffiths, 1st base Norelle Thomas, 3rd base Jana McCaskill

Under 19 Women's State Championships

2-4 October 2009 at Wynnum

Championship game

Plate Ron Trow, 1st base Matt Blake, 3rd base Ian Goodman

President's Cup.

Plate Ian Bunston, 1st base Ron Yardley, 3rd base Peter Walsh

Season finale

The Queensland State Championships season will end on the weekend of 27 -29 November with the Open Men's in Toowoomba, where 18 teams will be vying for the title. These Championships will see a number of plays from Australian Steelers World Championship team as well as players from all over Australia and New Zealand.

The competition is expected to be strong and intense with a number of representatives from the Australian Steelers World Championship team on display. Pitchers like Australian representatives Adam Folkard, Neal Delpero and Terry Downes will be firing their own brand of bullets at the opposing batters.



Under 16 Girl's State Championships
Grand Final crew



Under 16 Girl's State Championships
President's Cup crew

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Victoria

www.vuc.softball.org.au

Victorian Intermediate Course by Jason Carter

The VUC Training sub-committee held an Intermediate Course on Saturday 7th November at the Waverley Softball Association.

There were eight umpires in attendance:

- Dave Addlem (Geelong)
- Jarna Cherry (Casey)
- Chris Hutchings (Werribee)
- John Junker (Werribee)
- Steven Lloyd (Casey)
- Chris Nelson (Knox)
- Tracey Reid (Dandenong)
- Simone Reisman (Waverley)

Trainers for this event were:

- Jason Carter
- Kevin Broomhall

The format this year continued the ongoing training theme of shortening the theory component and increasing the opportunity to receive feedback on live games. It is for this reason that Waverley Softball Association was an excellent choice for running the course as their facilities are excellent and the level of ball is perfect for umpires to receive feedback.

Trainees were sent the VUC Intermediate Manual and 3-umpire Rotation PowerPoint presentation one week prior to the course. They were expected to have read the manual and brush up on the 3-umpire rotation system before attending and it was apparent they had all done that (well done folks!).



Words of wisdom: Victorian veteran umpire Kevin Broomhall had plenty to offer junior umpires and at the intermediate course.

Feedback from the course was very positive, with most umpires happy with the content. Most umpires also wanted more time in the classroom (which surprised me a bit!) but that feedback is most welcome and we'll modify the course for next time.

Another suggestion received was the idea of using videos to demonstrate illegal pitching. This is an excellent suggestion - and it's not much of a stretch to think that one day we could have videos online that demonstrate

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Victoria

www.vuc.softball.org.au

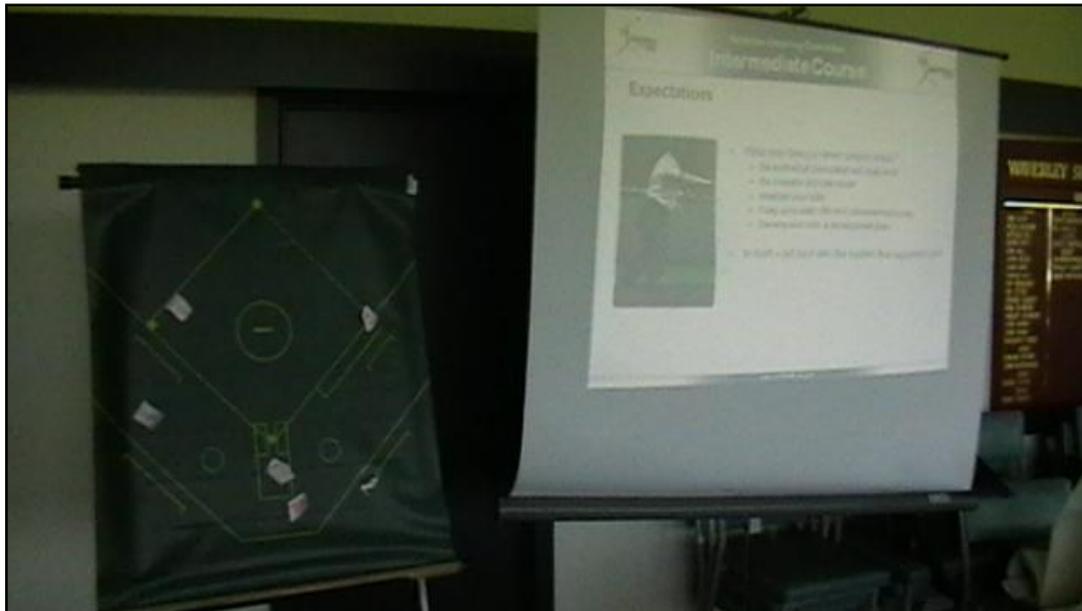
many aspects of the game. Perhaps on rotations, mechanics/signals and other things that are better demonstrated.

Following theory training, trainees were allocated to two games each on both plates (where possible) and bases. This provided an excellent opportunity for trainers to provide written feedback on their performance and then discuss the game with each umpire in a non-formal way.

The video camera was used to provide additional feedback to trainees with rotations or mechanics. It was particularly useful for showing issues with timing. I exported some of the videos and emailed them to those trainees where a visual account would be useful. This is the first time we've been able to do this and Softball Victoria should be recognised for providing the funding for a digital video camera for this purpose.

Of less value this year was the magnetic board we usually use to demonstrate rotations. Someone (me) forgot to pack the little magnetic men (or women - they're kind of androgynous little things) so we had to use sticky labels. Not quite the same effect but they got the job done.

My thanks to Kevin and Leigh for making themselves available as trainers and mentors. Thanks also to Stuart Tyler for organising the Waverley facilities. Stuart and Di Waller also were of great assistance in allocating trainees to appropriate games on the day.



Where are the magnetic players? The magnetic board is a wonderful tool to use when teaching umpires. It is even better when the figures are there to complete the picture.



Victoria

www.vuc.softball.org.au

Victoria adopts zero tolerance policy by Jason Carter

Early this year, a working group was formed to investigate the cause of poor behaviour by players and coaches. It had been noticed that, over several years, the enjoyment and safety of participants had degraded to the point that people were leaving the game. The loss of respect and discipline on the diamond was having a dramatic effect on our ability to attract and retain umpires.

After looking at several policies from several states and several sports, the working group created a draft document to generate discussion. A number of meetings with senior coaches and players, and representatives from Softball Victoria, were held to work through the issues so that we had a policy that addressed the concerns of everyone in the game.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Assist in the removal of personal abuse and unsportsmanlike behaviour from all aspects of the game of softball in Victoria
- Protect all participants from exposure to unsportsmanlike behaviour.
- Provide a consistent approach to penalties imposed for breaches of the Codes of Ethics
- Reduce the resources and overheads associated with dealing with minor breaches of the Codes of Ethics.

After eight months we're very pleased that, in cooperation with Softball Victoria and senior members of the coaching and player fraternity, Softball Victoria has announced that the Zero Tolerance Policy has been unanimously accepted by all associations.

In an email released November 18, 2009, Softball Victoria said:

"Softball Victoria, at the recent State Assembly, adopted an updated JUDICIARY REGULATION. The update now incorporates ZERO TOLERANCE and is effective immediately at all events conducted by Softball Victoria."

Additionally, "Delegates in attendance at the Assembly voted unanimously to adopt the Judiciary Regulation for implementation into their own region/association competitions. Delegates were instructed to adopt the Regulation at a formal meeting and introduce it to their members immediately."

The VUC would like to thank Bryan Edwards, Elaine Duyvestyn and the coaches and players involved in the development of the policy. We are all hopeful that the policy increases everyone's enjoyment of the game and provides consistency across the state.

To see the new policy, visit the [Softball Victoria web site](#) (Administration / Regulations and Policies section).

For more information on the policy or to be sent a PowerPoint presentation that summarises the policy for Coaches, Players, Umpires and Supporters, please contact Jason Carter (j.carter@bigpond.net.au) or Kevin Broomhall (sdu.kevb@bigpond.com).

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Softball Australia Awards of Excellence

Umpires recognised for international service by Mark Toft

At the recent Softball Australia Awards of Excellence dinner a number of senior umpires were recognised for their contributions to Softball Australia, the Australian Umpiring Program and their service on the international arena.

Leigh Evans (Victoria), Neville Lawrance (South Australia), Damien McCauley (South Australia) Debbie Grove (Victoria) and Diane Waller (Victoria) were awarded with Level 8 accreditation, the highest honour in the Australian Umpiring Program.

Darren Sibraa (Queensland), Scott Rindfleish (New South Wales) and Sue Itzstein (New South Wales) were awarded their Level 7 accreditation.

The night was also extra special for Darren Sibraa and Diane Waller who were announced as the joint winners of the prestigious Vivien Triplett Umpire of the Year Award. Darren Sibraa was the recipient of this award in 2006, while this year was the inaugural win for Victorian umpire, Diane Waller. Both umpires have had outstanding years both internationally and nationally. Darren (Queensland) and Diane (Victoria) also held the position of State Director in their respective States.

Umpire Achievements

Leigh Evans (Level 8)

2009 ISF XII Men's World Championship
2008 ISF World Men's Qualifier, Oceania Region
2007 Canada Cup
2007 Pacific Men's International Series
2006 Commonwealth Men's Series
2005 ISF Junior Men's World Championship

Damien McCauley (Level 8)

2008 ISF World Men's Qualifier, Oceania Region
2007 Pacific Men's International Series
2006 Commonwealth Men's Series
2004 ISF Open Men's World Series
2001 ISF Junior Men's World Series

Neville Lawrance (Level 8)

2007 Asia/Oceania Olympic Qualifier
2006 Commonwealth Men's Series
2004 Olympic Games, Athens
2003 Women's Olympic Qualifier
1998 ISF Women's World Championship



Dual winners: Darren Sibraa and Diane Waller receive the Vivien Triplett Umpire of the Year Award from Margo Koskelainen at the Awards of Excellence Dinner in Sydney recently.

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Softball Australia Awards of Excellence

Debbie Grove (Level 8)

2008 Olympic Games, Beijing
2008 Canada Cup
2007 ISF Junior Girls World Championship
2006 ISF Women's World Championship
2006 Canada Cup
2001 ISF Junior Men's World Series

Diane Waller (Level 8)

2008 Olympic Games, Beijing
2008 Canada Cup
2007 Asia/Oceania Olympic Qualifier
2006 ISF Women's World Championships

Sue Itzstein (Level 7)

2007 ISF Junior Women's World Championship

Darren Sibraa (Level 7)

2008 ISF Junior Men's World Championship
2008 ISF World Men's Qualifier, Oceania Region
2007 Pacific Men's International Series
2007 China Cup

Scott Rindfleish (Level 7)

2008 ISF Junior Men's World Championship
2008 ISF World Men's Qualifier, Oceania Region
2007 Pacific Men's International Series



Stepping up a level: L to R, Leigh Evans, Damien McCauley, Debbie Grove, Diane Waller, Darren Sibraa and Scott Rindfleish. Absent, Neville Lawrance and Sue Itzstein.

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MECHANICS BULLETIN

Date: 17/11/09

Subject: SAL MB 2009-10 Infield fly mechanic.

Definition

An infield fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive, or an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, when first and second, or first, second and third bases are occupied, before two are out. The pitcher, catcher and any outfielder who positions himself in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.

This rule is to protect the offensive team. If an infielder allows a fly ball to drop to the ground in this situation; there is a possibility for a double, or triple play.

Background.

The Mechanic for an infield fly has been; the base umpire(s) should give the assist signal to the plate umpire by pointing into the air to indicate in their opinion the fly ball can be caught with ordinary effort. The plate umpire would verbal "infield fly, the batter is out".

If the base umpires, or at least the base umpire in the proximity of the hit gives the assist signal the plate umpire should call the infield fly.

2009 ISF Rules congress changes for 2010. Rule 10 Sec 1, L5.

The Plate umpire and the base umpire will have equal authority to call the batter out for the infield fly rule.

New Mechanics.

1. The base umpire(s) will still give the assist signal when an infield fly occurs.
2. The plate umpire assumes primary responsibility for calling the infield fly.
By the time the ball has reached the top of its arc, the plate umpire should determine if it is an infield fly.
The plate umpire should also be aware of the assist signal given by the base umpire(s).
The plate umpire should then call the "infield fly" and signal "out".
3. When an infield fly ball is around the outer limits of the infield area it may be difficult for the plate umpire to judge the depth of the hit.
All base umpire(s), but at least the base umpire in the proximity of the fly ball should give the assist signal.

4. If the base umpire in the proximity of the hit has given the assist signal then the plate umpire should call the infield fly.

However if the plate umpire has not called the infield fly, then the base umpire should call "infield fly" and signal "out".

The base umpire can make the out signal by adjusting from the assist signal.

5. If the fly ball is not caught and becomes foul, the plate umpire should call and signal "Foul Ball". This should be mirrored by the base umpire making the infield fly call if applicable.

Leigh Evans

Umpire in Chief - Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

Debbie Grove

Umpire in Chief - Development
National Umpiring Program
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MECHANICS BULLETIN

04/11/09

Subject: Use of ready position SAL_MB 2009-9

Background

The ready position, as opposed to the set position with runners on base, was introduced at the international clinic in 2004 and has been utilised by ISF certified umpires when preparing for International events.

The Ready Position is the body position of a base umpire pre, during and prior to the pitch reaching the batter and/or catcher.

Ready Position

The Ready Position is now to be used by all umpires at all levels.

As the pitcher assumes the set position (hands together), the umpire should step into the ready position (no more than 2 steps), stopping just prior to the start of the pitch with his/her feet a comfortable distance apart (at least shoulder width), stay relaxed but still.

Before the pitcher releases the pitch adopt the 'ready' position by unlocking the knees slightly, with the weight resting lightly on the balls of the feet and the hands drawn in close to the belt line in front of the body, or with relaxed open hands and arms bent at the elbows approximately 45 degrees.

The umpire should stay in this position until the ball reaches the catcher or is hit by the batter.

If the pitch is hit or the catcher throws the ball to a base, the umpire pushes off on the balls of his feet and moves to position for a potential play. Umpires at 1st or 3rd base should push off with the outermost foot.

Both umpires should assume the position simultaneously. This is best done by the umpire at either first or third base, while umpires at second should take the timing from the umpire at either first or third base.

Note: In this stance the umpire's upper body should be relaxed.

The umpire should not be in a semi sitting position.

If fists are used they should not be flexed and the umpire should be nimble on the balls of his feet. A good example of this is the fielders; they go into a ready position every pitch with the pitcher.

Starting Depth

- a) With no runners on base the umpires should stand approximately 4-6 meters behind the base in foul territory, with the inner foot 150 mm off the fair/foul line.
- b) With runners on base the base umpires should assume a ready position by facing SQUARE TO THE BATTER, approximately 3-5 metres behind the base in foul territory at 1st or 3rd, or from the base line at 2nd.

In all cases umpires should be close enough so the umpire can move and rotate inside or to the next position when required without rotating during the play or being late to position. This will depend on each umpires mobility, reaction time and the speed of the game

Position for a Calls on Bases

The Ready Position is also the body position of a base umpire prior to a call.

The umpire should go to the Ready Position as the play at the base unfolds and stay still in this position for the duration of the play before rendering a decision.

The Ready Position then allows the base umpire to quickly react to overthrows, errors, and secondary plays.

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Brunei Clinic

Brunei umpiring and scoring clinic by Neville Lawrance

Mike Hannelly and I were invited to conduct a clinic in Brunei to include Scorers and Umpires. Liz Hannelly also attended at her own expense and provided valuable help and assistance with both clinics and as well as an official scorer for one of the two diamonds during the tournament.

The trip started with flights to Brisbane where Mike, Liz and I meet before flying to Brunei on a Royal Brunei flight where we were greeted before having passed customs by Ak. Khairil Sapyri (Boy). Seems that if you work at the airport you are afforded certain privileges that the general public don't enjoy. Boy had our bags on the trolley ready to pass customs while we were still getting past immigration.

We were taken to our hotel where we were to stay during the clinics - just a three minute walk to the Stadium Negara Hassanal Bolki where both clinics were conducted. The scoring clinic was held in a lecture auditorium while the umpiring clinic was held in a conference room, seems the air-conditioning was better in the conference room.



Umpires sitting the exam

I assisted with the scorer's clinic providing the rules content aspects of the course, this proved to be very useful and provided more informative information than what Mike and Liz would have been able to present. It also provided an opportunity to expand on umpire - scorer relations and the ways that both are able to benefit from mutual co-operation during a game.

The umpire's clinic was presented to a core group of 15 umpires with an additional 11 people attending several parts of the clinic. These were made-up of umpires, coaches and scorers who showed considerable interest in the lectures.

The topics covered during the three day clinic included:

- Rule Book - broken up into seven sessions so as to maintain interest and concentration
- Rotation theory - two, three and four man systems
- Rotation practical sessions
- Mechanics
- Special rules - DP/Flex, Run Scores/Doesn't Score, Umpire Signals, Players Coaches Substitutions, Appeal Play Timing, Blood Rule and The Game. This session was also presented to the scorers as part of their clinic
- Video presentation on Rule 6 - this was also given to coaches at the Technical Meeting with copies provided to all umpires and coaches with various team officials requesting additional copies to take home

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Brunei Clinic

- Plate Umpire-included Working the Slot, Working with Catches, Pitchers and Coaches and Line-up Card Management
- Dehydration and Re-hydration
- ISF Rules Exam - included discussion on correct answers

The tournament was the 10th ASEAN MEN'S SOFTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS with six teams competing over four days with five games per day in the rounds and four games for the finals, we were not going to be over taxed given that we had two diamonds and only three time slots. The grounds used were in the middle of downtown Brunei and were the Royal Parade grounds, used only for very special events and was considered a very special privilege for softball to be played there.

When I first saw the grounds I was struck down with fear. The home run fence on the two diamonds were a common fence for some 60-70 feet and was constructed of 2x1 rough sawn timber posts every 8 feet with plastic angle nailed into the top of the posts holding extremely light nylon netting all held together with plastic zip-ties. Due to a concern about ground balls passing under the fence the bottom of the netting was attached to the same 2x1 timber laid on the ground and held to the post's and joined together with the same zip-ties.



What a view! Looking from left field.

A solid back net of steel tube and cyclone mesh was used and this extended to the start of the dugout and was open field to the home run fence. The whole surface was grass and generally speaking was fairly flat and level although a little soft under foot in places. Both diamonds were short of the required 250' by about 7' and while this seemed to be a concern to the organizers this was certainly the least of my concerns. Areas outside the playing area was concrete paving which become very slippery for outfielders wearing cleats running flat out trying to catch foul fly's and being unable to stop before reaching the paving.

The tournament was to be played in the shadow of one of the main mosques in Brunei and as a consequence it was imperative that play stopped before the call to prayer. This was to occur irrespective of the state of the game, innings or at bat. Early warning of prayer times allowed some sort of planed stoppages to occur at more convenient times in the game.

The tournament started on the Thursday and while there was some rain about we were able to complete the first two games and have the official opening. The second time slot was just one game which had to be stopped at the end of the first innings. After a brief shower we were able to recommence the game completing just one more innings before it really started to rain and proceeded to turn the playing field into swimming pools. No more softball was possible and while we got an early finish it meant that day two would be a long one.

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Brunei Clinic

In an effort to catch-up lost games we used five timeslots on day two, this involved playing the last timeslot under lights that were never meant for playing softball. While, when the lights were eventually turned on, the result were less than desirable the teams were eager to play and no-one was throwing at 150Km/hr so the "night games" were played and concluded without incident.

The rest of the tournament proceeded without incident and while the umpires continued to learn and develop from one game to the next only with continued self assessment and evaluation with the standard of umpiring continue to improve.



ASEAN Championship Trophy

An umpires association or group that meet together on a regular basis to share and learn from each others mistakes can only continue to strengthen and improve the standard of umpiring in Brunei. I look forward to returning sometime in the near future to hopefully help to build on the work that has been done and will hopefully continue.

The final game was a very tight well played game between Philippines and Indonesia with victory going to the Philippines in a 3-2 ball game that looked as if it was going to a tie breaker. The score was 2-2 after six innings and only an unanswered run that the Philippines managed to scramble in the top of the innings preventing extra innings being required.



The final crew: Six umpires worked the final

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