

BLUES NEWS ON LINE

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

October Edition Vol 9 of 2003

Quartet get together to celebrate Betty McGuire's Golden Anniversary



A Wealth of Knowledge: L to R, Felix Menke, Vivien Triplett, Betty McGuire and Margo Koskelainen O.A.M. caught up at the National Umpire's Conference in Melbourne recently. Betty McGuire was Guest of Honour at this year's dinner, celebrating 50 years in the sport of softball. **Pic - A. McAuliffe**

Deadline for NEXT ISSUE (NOVEMBER) - OCTOBER 23, 2003

Publication date (approx) of November Issue - NOVEMBER 7, 2003

Previous editions of Blue's News On-Line are available from the Resource Library on the Umpire's Website
nuc.softball.org.au

MARGO'S MEMO



Margo's has been "snowed" under

As Margo has been very busy with the 2004 National Appointments she has entrusted me with let you know a few things.

You will notice that the 2004 National Appointments are on page 10 of this edition. Margo sends her apologies for the delay - but she did make the end of September deadline.

Umpires are advised that should their circumstances change and they are not able to accept their appointment, Margo would appreciate notification immediately.

It should also be noted that ASF will be forwarding Invoices to the relevant umpires for the Umpires Levy in October.



Believe in yourself

**...and in your dream
though impossible things may seem,
someday, somehow you'll get through
to the goal you have in view.**

**Mountains fall and seas divide
before the one who in his stride
takes a hard road day by day,
sweeping obstacles away.**

**Believe in yourself and in your plan,
say not - I cannot - but, I can.**

**The prizes of life we fail to win
because we doubt the power within.**

What's in this Edition

- National Appointments
- Inter-personal Communications
- National Venues 2005/2006
- Letters to the Editor
- Mental focus for Umpires
- Making Rules Simple
- Deadline for BNOL
- State Wraps
 - Queensland
 - A.C.T.
 - Western Australia

PSYCHOLOGY IN INTER-PERSONAL COMMUNICATION (for Umpires)

Introduction

No longer regarded as an analytical tool used where something is 'wrong', psychology can be an effective tool to be used in the preparation of the sports official. Here we will be looking at aspects of psychology that affect our reactions to other people that we come into contact with during our role as a sports official. In particular, this article addresses the areas of familiarity and personal space, which are closely related.

How we React to Other People

What is your greatest form of frustration when umpiring?
(you have one minute to write down as many points they can think of).

Some answers could be:

- lack of player education
- behavioural rules of society being different from the rules of behaviour in a game situation (the values and disciplines of society are changing which is effecting sport).
- officials & coaches are not approachable
- bias
- loss of control
- aggression
- lack of communication

You should find in your list a number of points which reflect how you react to other people which are normally based on *your* assumptions and expectations.

Exercise 1

(establishing levels of familiarity)

Turn to another person and say "Hello". The reaction is an expected reply. Follow up by responding with "How are you?"

Levels of Familiarity

When dealing people it is the assumptions and expectations that lead us into relationships. This simple example shows that it is normal to move through a series of levels of familiarity; gaining trust as we go.

As a sports official we often find ourselves in a situation where suddenly we are face to face with a person we have never met before (coach or player), who has invaded our personal space, without an invitation, and is screaming

wildly about our judgment and game management skills.

This 'jumping' of levels is what makes us feel uncomfortable, defensive, aggressive, angry, etc – all natural human reactions. As an official we need to be very careful to stay within the boundaries of normal relationship behaviour because only a small jump in familiarity levels can trigger a defensive reaction.

The time spent during pre-game equipment checks and the pre-game meeting with coaches is a good chance to start the relationship between the umpires and teams. Having only a few minutes of interaction can be an advantage because it limits you to introductions only, thus avoiding either party 'jumping' levels. Over time (a tournament or even a full season or two) you will have the opportunity to further establish these relationships with certain coaches and players.

Exercise 2

(reaction)

Try saying to another person "You look miserable!" The natural reaction is to 'smile'.

Human beings generally tend to be agreeable or harmonious (congruent) – it is in our nature to be agreeable but it is also natural to react defensively when the situation becomes uncomfortable.

Body Language & Personal Space

Exercise 3

(personal space)

Try this exercise with another person: stand approximately three metres apart. One person stands still while the other moves slowly toward them. When the person standing still starts to feel uncomfortable, because the other person is too close, they are to raise their hand to stop the other person.

If you are trying this exercise in a group situation, compare the distances between different pairs.

Swaps roles and repeat the exercise .

When officiating we can often find ourselves inadvertently breaking the normally acceptable boundaries of personal space.

.....Continues Page 3

...from Page 2

An angry player or coach arguing with an umpire is what we, as officials, usually remember.

However, consider the other side of the personal space boundary; never get too close to a coach or player. By mirroring their stance and approach (a normal thing for humans to do) we risk inflaming the situation and losing control. Instead ask and gesture to them to move to a neutral area – usually away from the scene of the play and other players. Walking side by side for a few paces allows time for you to establish a comfortable space so you can then talk through the situation calmly (keeping a comfortable distance between both parties).

As an 'official' we must maintain our boundaries of authority and control but not create an obstacle to interpersonal communication.

When confronting a player over a technical matter or unsportsmanlike behaviour watch their body language. Are they confronting or avoid in their mannerisms? Avoiding eye contact or an aggressive stance can tell you a lot about their mood which will help you to decide how you should respond in such a situation. A person who is avoiding eye contact by looking up, scratching parts of the face and standing with an open stance is usually lying. An 'aggressive' stance (leaning forward or crossed arms, with head forward) usually means hostility – but this can be diffused by responding with an 'open' stance (half pace to the rear, arms open at sides with hands open and palms facing upwards).

In Softball we hold a pre-game meeting at home plate. This is a very good place to meet because it forces the participants to keep a set distance apart so there is no accidental intrusion into any personal space. But umpires spend a lot of time working very close to the catcher where it can be natural for them to move close to people without realising they have crossed a personal space boundary. Use the spaces available to your advantage.

At the next pre-game meeting (either as an observer or participant), as the umpires shake hands with the coaches, take note of the style of handshake (who's hand is on top) and the distance between the participants. The shake of the hands can send a very powerful message about dominance. And, although meeting at home plate forces participants to keep their distance, also be aware of the personal space boundary variations that can occur during the hand-shake (reaching over to maintain space, or comfortable stance & body posture).

Be aware of personal space and use it as a management tool in your games.

Set Goals

- Make a conscious effort at your next game to use the pre-game inspection and meeting to start a dialogue with players and coaches being conscious NOT to jump levels of familiarity.
- Experiment and find your personal space boundaries. Learn to recognise the boundaries of others and use it as a management tool.
- ALWAYS hold a pre-game meeting.
- Use the theories presented here to help you enjoy officiating – and you can help others enjoy the experience more by using appropriate communications skills and respecting the personal space of others.

The information supplied in this article is based on a lecture 'Psychology' presented by Gavin Freeman, at the AIS on 1 July 2003, as part of the ACT Sport & Recreation Skilling Of Officials Series. Martin Turnbull is a Level 5 umpire, based in the ACT, who holds a degree in Adult Education and is a qualified ASC Sports Official Coach.

Nationals Venue Announcements	Division	Year	Venue	Year	Venue
	Women	2005	SA	2006	VIC
	19 Women	2005	VIC	2006	QLD
	16 Girls	2005	NSW	2006	ACT
	Men	2005	TAS	2006	NSW
	19 Men	2005	WA	2006	TAS
	16 Boys	2005	QLD	2006	WA
	23 Women	2005	VIC	2006	ACT
	23 Men	2005	ACT	2006	QLD

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.

Thomas Edison

I don't know why this has taken so long to be circulated - I believe that our schools have been not teaching spelling for years!!

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at an Elingsh uinervtisy, it deosn't mttær in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht frist and lsat ltteer is at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a toatl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae we do not raed ervey lteter by it slef but the wrod as a wlohe.

I am back after 20 years

What a delight it is after more than 20 years away from Softball, having had my interest re-kindled, to find such a wonderfully informative journal as Blues News and also to see familiar names such as Andrew Reindfleisch still active in umpiring.

My original association with the sport commenced with North Rocks Club and then developed through Auburn Association and culminated in what was probably the shortest ever Vice Presidency (terminated because of unrelated problems) in the history of the NSW Association.

At that stage my daughter and wife were the catalyst and today my granddaughters have drawn me back to the sport.

Needless to say one game attended and I am back to my first love as nominated umpire for the U 13 North Rocks side.

This of course led to the inevitable search for a current rule book and some guidance as to application of rules to the modern game.

I have already downloaded all of 2003 issues and am overwhelmed by the common sense approach and clarity of description of the rules addressed in those issues and must say that my enthusiasm is at a level that I never believed would be possible.

Congratulations on an excellent presentation both from a journalistic and technical viewpoint.

Ken Welsh.

P.S. Sorry but I spelt Andrew's surname incorrectly. You must agree that when your own name is five letters only it is difficult to comprehend how to spell a name with double that number. Regards.

Ken W

UMPIRES NEEDED FOR CORPORATE GAMES

Melbourne Softball Association is pleased to advise we are host to the SOFTBALL component of the 2003 AUSTRALIAN CORPORATE GAMES.

This is a great competition and draws interest from a wide range of the corporate sector - all out for a good time whilst seeking a win for their team, their company.

Games will be played under RECREATIONAL SLOWPITCH SOFTBALL rules (allowing for mixed gender teams) at Fawkner Park, South Yarra.

If not able to play or be involved in a team please consider assisting Melbourne Softball. In particular we need UMPIRES.
STOP - don't think of an umpire as those involved in mainstream softball!!

Umpiring slowpitch softball is a totally different role - one without the pressures of seeing and calling strikes/balls, without the uniform and without the protective gear.

What do you need? just a basic understanding of softball, a short session to explain the 'rules', a willingness to enjoy a game in a relaxed environment and take home up to \$100 a day.

Interested please contact either Wayne Duyvestyn (0414.533716) or myself. Elaine Duyvestyn, General Manager, Melbourne Softball Association Inc. 0402 051543, melbsoft@sx.com.au, www.melbourne.softball.org.au

Oh, no!... no No-hitter

I was sitting behind an enthusiastic mum at my son's Little League game. Her boy was pitching for the opposing team, and she cheered as he threw wild pitch after wild pitch.

The poor kid walked every batter. It was only the first inning, and the score was 14-0. Then one batter finally smacked the ball.

"Oh, no!" the mum wailed. "There goes his no-hitter!"

SUCCESS

**It is not the position you stand,
But the direction in which you look!**

Contributions to Blue's News On-Line

Following the National Umpire's Conference there are a few things which have come to light regarding contributions to our National Umpiring Magazine.

- BNOL has been highly successful in establishing a broad reader base.
- Many readers eagerly await the release of each issue.
- BNOL has contributed to the NUP's goal of improving communication.

For our National Magazine to work efficiently and effectively we rely on a number of monthly contributions. Currently we have five or six senior umpires who contribute articles for the magazine on a regular basis, but we need more.

It was also mentioned that contribution deadline is to be 5.00pm on the second last Friday of each month, giving me the opportunity to edit, collate and set out the next edition. Late newsworthy articles will be taken **only** if they can not wait until the next issue. Otherwise they will sit on the register until next publication date.

State Director's and their Communications Officer should ensure that I have State updates each month by the deadline date. At the moment we are lucky to get one or even two States to contribute to the NATIONAL Magazine, which is very disappointing.

It doesn't matter if it is set to go into your own State Newsletter. If it's about umpiring let everyone in Australia know about it in the National Umpiring Magazine.

So I call on all readers of this edition to get onto your State Directors and ask for more of your State updates to be sent to me on a regular basis. If you are reading this and reckon you can help out contact me by email mtoft@ozemail.com.au.

I am fully aware that we all lead busy lives (so do I) but hey this Magazine is for all umpires all over Australia. If we can be the medium for our Blues (junior and senior) to learn a little more that would be brilliant.

Another avenue which will give us more articles is reports from State and National Championships. You never know I may request you to do an article for BNOL.

Thanks for your support.

Mark Toft (Tofty)

Julie and Peter converge on Tom Price (WA)

At the request of Tom Price Softball Association, Julie and Peter Richardson ran a comprehensive umpiring clinic. Below is an extract from their report:

We arrived early Friday morning, where we were met by Paula and Wes O'Dwyer who we stayed with. It was well known that we were coming up to do a clinic because the moment we reached the O'Dwyer's house the phone started ringing.

Friday afternoon we had people coming to the house to welcome us and to ask softball questions. Friday evening we went to the local ground and had a talk with 30 players on the do and don'ts of softball (the best way to work with umpires on the grounds) followed by a barge of questions. This went from 6.00pm to 9.30pm it was only meant to go till 8.00pm

Saturday morning 9.00am to 11.00am we held a rules clinic which was attended by 25 players, both senior and junior, this was on basic rules. Followed again by plenty of questions. At 11am an on diamond-positioning clinic was conducted.

Four main points were emphasised

1. Basic movement around the diamond
2. Inside-outside theory
3. Always keep the play in front of them.
4. Umpires are the third team.

This went until the games started at 12.30pm. Every body there was very keen to put what they had learnt into practice as they soaked up the information like sponges. We then watched the next three games, and went on to the diamond each half innings to talk to the umpires on the game, to correct some of their positioning. During the games some of the people who had attended the clinics, were coming to us and telling us that they had learnt so much, and could see where it made so much sense once they could see it in game conditions.

Sunday was still full on softball we were asked to help out with a scratch match between the Women's team trying out for the Northwest Championships and a Men's Masters side. This went for three hours and followed by a BBQ at the grounds.

Summary

Tom Price Women and Men are very keen to learn. There are a number of very keen players who would like to sit there level one practical since they all received a pass mark in theory exam.

Julie and Peter Richardson (Western Australia)

Plenty of umpire talent at Under 19 State Championships

Queensland held its Under 19 Men's and Under Women's State Championships at two separate venues during the first weekend of school holidays.

Under 19 Men's

The Queensland Under 19 Men's Championships were held at South Brisbane and featured an all-male crew except for Tricia Sibraa who was the Tournament Chief Umpire (TCU).

The crew was a mix of experienced umpires, umpires who are presenting for Level 2 and Level 3 at the Under 16 Championships in a few weeks time, a new Examiner and a trainee examiner.

All in all the crew worked particularly well together over the 3-day Championship in what could be described as perfect mid-20's conditions.

QUEENSLAND

Many of the new Blue's showed a willingness to learn about umpiring and were able to take away things to work on in the future.

The Championship game was between Redlands and Mt Isa (players of which made up the majority of the State team). The final was locked at 2-all after seven innings with Redlands taking the title in the first of the tie-breaker innings.

Under 19 Women's

The Women's Championships was held at Downey Park, Brisbane under the direction of Yvonne Kahler (TCU), with Helen Strauss and Robyn Pittman as the examiners.

Ron Trow and Ian Frame conducted a clinic on Saturday focusing on the third base mechanics of a 3-umpire system. Many of the younger umpires, especially the country umpires benefited greatly.

The women's final saw Brisbane take the title from a gallant Caboolture team.

Officiating the finals -

Men's Championship Game - Darren Sibraa, Mark Toft, Rick Gill

Men's President's Cup - David Casey, Peter Baxter, Mike Williamson

Women's Championship Game - Jamie Harries, Michael Trost, Matt Blake

Women's President's Cup - Di Bunston, Kim Brunsmann, Spence Williams

Successful Level 3 Candidates

Rick Gill - South Brisbane, Boyd Davidson - Brisbane, Matt Blake - Redlands, and Heather Brown - South Brisbane



New Softball fields for Emerald

Queensland Umpiring Committee member, Ron Trow was on hand to conduct a clinic at Emerald earlier this year which coincided with the opening of the associations new playing fields. Pictured Ron Trow (left) and local umpire Malcolm Daniels.

WA Blues pass their Practical

There have been a number of umpires in WA over the last few months that have attained levels after passing their practical examinations.

Evidence of the work being done by SEDSUA to recruit and train younger umpires is the recent passes of three junior umpires at Dale Districts. Claire Groves and Erin Chalwell achieved their Level 1 accreditation and Lauren Scott attained her Level 2 (picture below).



Newest Level 1 Blues: L to R, Claire Groves, Lauren Scott and Erin Chalwell. Welcome to the Blue Family.

The SEDSUA Junior Blues program is run by Rob Harris with all SEDSUA umpires donating their time to assist junior umpires. Umpiring both Juniors and Senior games, the program aims to provide juniors with the opportunity to learn how to umpire.

Also attaining his Level 2 at Dale Districts was umpiring stalwart Ron Mills. Ron has umpired Baseball for many years

and has only recently begun umpiring Softball. Congratulations Ron.

Western Australia

After many years involved with softball, Del Graham has attained her Level 1. Welcome to the program as an accredited umpire, Del!

At recent games of the WASA Means Winter Competition, Bob Bond and

Continued Page 11

Umpire's Fees for 9th Australian Masters Games

Previous advice from the 9th Australian Masters Games (9AMG) management committee has been that Umpires' fees for the Masters Games would be \$154 (Includes Games Entry Fee & Sports Fee)

The fees have been re-considered as a consequence of a large number of officials questioning the requirement for officials having to pay such a high amount when they are effectively working as part of the games management team. Accredited Umpires will now have an option in regards to 9AMG fees.

Option 1 - Pay NO Fees

By paying no Games or Sports Fee you will not receive the benefits that accredited persons receive. This includes no additional Insurance or Sports Medicine cover.

However, in choosing this option you MUST have Personal Accident Insurance coverage from your State Association or Personal Accident Insurance Coverage. Proof of this cover must be provided to Softball Canberra upon your arrival at the grounds.

If you choose Option 1 but intend to go to 9AMG events such as the Opening Ceremony & Closing Ceremonies, the 9AMG Melbourne Cup Function (\$17.50), or the Softball Canberra Dug Out Dinner (\$25), you must pay for these separate items. You will not be formally registered as a game participant and therefore, not receive an Accreditation Pass. Note: Without an Accreditation Pass you will not be eligible to certain benefits such as free games public transport.

If an umpire has already registered and paid the 'Full' or 'Accompanying Persons' Fee but wishes to change to the 'NO Fee' option you may apply for a refund.

This option is designed for those umpires whose priority is coming to the games to umpire.

Option 2 - Accompanying Persons Fee

Pay the Accompanying Persons (AP) Fee and you will receive the benefits as per AP detailed in the registration book:

- * Official 9AMG accreditation
- * Official 9AMG Games Kit comprising:
 - Games Backpack
 - Drink Bottle
 - Sport and leisure product samples
 - Official Games Guide

- Participant Discount Voucher Book for products & services
- Tourist Information

- Opening Ceremony entry pass to participate in the Ceremony and enjoy all the entertainment and excitement as Canberra welcomes you to the Games
- Melbourne Cup Day celebration (All sport competitions are expected to cease from 1pm)
- Closing Ceremony entry pass to participate in Canberra's biggest party for 2003
- Games Centre - Canberra Labour Club membership for 3 years, including the use of all facilities and exclusive access to 9AMG nightly entertainment
- Personal accident insurance

The Accompanying Persons' fee option does not entitle you to a medal, or Sports Medicine (Massages). You will still receive Emergency First Aid if you are injured however any other associated treatment could be at your own expense. You will receive 9AMG Personal Accident Insurance.

If you choose Option 2 but intend to go to 9AMG Melbourne Cup Function (\$17.50), or the Softball Canberra Dug Out Dinner (\$25), you must pay for these as separate items.

If an umpire has already registered and paid the 'Full' Fee but wishes to change to the 'Accompanying Persons' option you may apply for a refund.

Option 3 - Full Fee

If you pay \$154, as an umpire, you will receive all the benefits of a registered player, including:

- all of the Accompanying Persons package (listed above)
- quality sports medicine coverage
- medals for top three place getters
- sport program for your sport competition
- a participation certificate.
- \$40.00 refund from Softball Canberra (not 9AMG organization) to assist with costs

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Masters Games plans in full swing

By Martin Turnbull

Planning is in full swing for the 9th Australian Masters Games - now with over 90 teams registered we know it is going to be a BIG event.

Now all we have to do is wait and see if every team brings an umpire - otherwise there might be a few disappointed teams who have their entry refused at the last minute.

Games will be played at both Hawker and Kaleen - but only Hawker has lights so the Kaleen'ers can expect an early mark.

There will be the usual Masters social events but the UIC is planning a few quiet extras to keep the social aspects of umpiring at the games most enjoyable. We are also aware that many umpires will be traveling to us from remote areas so it is planned to pair them up with some of the more senior umpires to work games together and pass on some skills that our country cousins may rarely experience.

In the lead up the 9AMG a local ACT pre-season league has been run so our Masters players can get some practice in before the big event. As this has been a non-competitive league (the play was competitive; just that the runs didn't count!) it has been an opportunity to run some basic umpire training.

Most of the trainees were first-timers and all showed great interest and promise. A couple of the juniors have shown such enthusiasm that we are taking them over to Adelaide to experience the SASA 2003 Labor Day Challenge. That's eight umpires traveling to support six Canberra teams - a fact that will probably be appreciated more by the SASA UIC than anyone else!

The training involved the usual lecture series but also lots of practical work during the games, where we worked the 2 umpire system with four umpires. I have wanted to try this method for complete novice umpires for a few years - and this was the opportunity.

The trainees first sat off diamond as an observer for an innings or two and then, working as if co-joined came onto the diamond to work on positional mechanics. We then slowly handed over the responsibility for the calls as their confidence grew. This worked really well because it gave the trainees almost instant confidence, knowing there was an experienced umpire ready to back them up.

**Australian
Capital
Territory**

This method can be very hard work for the supervising umpires but is well worth the effort - the trainees learnt practical skills and experience which would normally have taken much longer to gain. So, if you are coming to Canberra for the 9AMG you may get to work with one of our newest umpires! I am looking forward to seeing many of you in just a few weeks at the 9AMG in Canberra (but not looking forward to the 16 hour bus ride to Adelaide this weekend, or working out over a thousand 9AMG appointments in the next few weeks...)

Nationalshere we come!

By now everyone going to the 2004 Nationals Championships have received their appointments, if not go directly to page 10 of this edition.

Nationals is always a special time for me and I feel it is the rewards of being an umpire that you have a chance to umpire the best of the best Australia has to offer.

To work with umpires from different States, to make new friends, to meet up with old friends, to go places you would never have gone if you weren't an umpire, there are so many advantages.

As editor of this National Magazine I take the opportunity to congratulate everyone on their appointments and I would like to make special mention of the following fellow Blues.

The Level 6 candidates, Scott Rindfleish, Amanda Greggs, Kevin Tanner-bring, Graham Boyle, Phil Waller, Robyn Pittman and Yvonne Kahler congratulations guys you all deserve your shot at Level six. I hope you all have a great time and take that next step up the ladder.

The Level Five candidates, Cathy Allen, Alan Cheeseman, Kevin Offer, Ron Trow, Heather Randall and Dave Roberts again congratulations. It is wonderful to have so many Level 5 candidates and I know most of you will just love the experience at Nationals. Good luck.

Wow! 13 Candidates that speaks volume for our program. I was only saying the other day that boy it's a tough system we have to go through, but hey it's all worth in the end. Don't you think?

Nationals 2004 Bring 'em on!

Tofty

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The Skill of Mental Focus For Umpires

by Joel Balberman

It has been said that umpiring is an activity that is 25% physical and 75% mental. While you may not agree with the exact numbers, it is clear that as umpires, we are engaged in a task that demands that we occupy the proper "head space" in order to achieve our best possible results.

Focus or concentration is an important element of the mental aspects of umpiring. Just what is concentration? According to Professors Robert Weinberg and Peggy Richardson, co-authors of *Psychology of Officiating*, (Leisure Press, 1990) it is "the ability to focus on the relevant cues in the environment and to maintain that focus over the course of the contest." (Many of the ideas included here come from this book.)

Just what cues are relevant for the umpire? It will depend on whether your assignment for that game is the plate or the bases. Plate umpires require a narrow focus most of the time, while their partners in the field must have a broader focus most of the time. The relevant cues are learned through game experience. Meaningless or distracting cues such as crowd noise, must be blocked out. In this way, the umpire can attend to the key elements of the contest.

Attention and focus can be discussed with regards to two factors: direction and width. Direction refers to internal vs external, while width ranges from broad to narrow. Umpires use all four combinations of these factors. For example, an umpire may need to use a narrow-internal focus to calm an overactive emotional state after an ejection before getting back behind the plate. In calling a banger, a narrow-external focus is required.

A broad-external focus helps to place the runners after an overthrown ball has gone out of play. A broad-internal focus can help an individual to establish a game plan for personal improvement through goal-setting. Throughout the course of a game, umpires may have to switch rapidly from one type of attentional focus to another.

According to our definition, focus must be maintained from beginning to the end of the game. This means that external factors such as lopsided scores, interruptions and delays, hot, cold or rainy weather, altercations, the length of the game, as well as internal distractions such as improper thoughts, mental and physical fatigue and boredom must be overcome in order to achieve the goal of focus.

What problems do umpires encounter in maintaining focus and attention?

- Many umpires think too much out on the diamond. This could include:
 - thinking about past events in the game such as a possible blown call
 - thinking about the future and all the "what-ifs" that could happen
 - thinking of too many things and too many cues all at once.
 - thinking of events and problems in the umpire's personal life off the diamond
- Anxiety and stress are not controlled and fall below or rise above the optimum level. In either case, attention suffers, and so does performance. In some cases, the umpire may have the improper direction (internal rather than external) and width (narrow rather than broad) of attention.

For example, the umpire may be distracted by his or her own anxieties and worries, focusing internally instead of externally on the game. This can lead to poor or inconsistent performance. Activation techniques such as self-talk need to be employed for the too-low stress level, and relaxation techniques can help to reduce a stress level that has risen too high.

Suffice to say, it is a challenge to maintain focus and do so from the first pitch of the game up until the final out is recorded. Maintaining concentration is the challenge of umpiring, and it is the skill that has the most to do with the development of consistency, that ability that distinguishes the excellent umpire from the good umpire.

WHO IS JOEL BALBERMAN?

Joel Balberman lives in Brantford, Ontario, Canada and has been umpiring since 1973. Worked baseball exclusively until 1980; introduced to fastpitch in 1980, and since 1985, has done fastpitch and slowpitch exclusively. He has attended many provincial championship tournaments at all levels, both (male and female); officiated at two Canadian national tournaments - 1990, Junior ladies in Kamloops BC and 1995, Senior Men's in St. John's Newfoundland.. Joel was awarded ISF level 5 rating as a result of 1995 tournament and was appointed by Softball Canada to umpire at the ISF Vth World Junior Men's Championship held in St. John's, Newfoundland from July 20 to July 27, 1997. He can be reached at : joel.balberman@sympatico.ca

<p>WOMEN JANUARY 3-10 BRISBANE TCU Koskelainen, Margo VIC</p> <p><i>Examiners:</i> Sibraa Tricia QLD Gowty, Matthew QLD</p> <p><i>Umpires:</i> Crowe, David NSW Evans, Leigh VIC Itzstein, Sue NSW James, George VIC Keogh, Debbie VIC McCahon, Bruce NSW Shephard, Darrell NSW Waller, Diane VIC Whitehead, Lindsay VIC</p> <p><i>Candidates:</i> Rindfleish, Scott NSW</p>	<p>U19 MEN JANUARY 4-10 ADELAIDE TCU McAuliffe, John SA</p> <p><i>Examiners:</i> Culpitt, Ken ACT Rindfleish, Andrew NSW</p> <p><i>Umpires:</i> Broomhall, Kevin VIC McCauley, Damien SA Pascall, Trevor NSW Richardson, Julie WA Thomas, Frank QLD</p> <p><i>Candidates:</i> Greggs, Amanda NSW Tannebring, Kevin SA</p> <p><i>Skill Share:</i> Quong, Derek NT</p>	<p>16 GIRLS JANUARY 11-17 PERTH TCU Lawrance, Neville SA</p> <p><i>Examiners:</i> Grove, Debbie VIC McAuliffe, Alan SA</p> <p><i>Umpires:</i> Baker, Greg NSW Bancroft, Graham WA Duff, Warren WA Houison, Ron VIC Maas, Betty WA Webster, Graham SA</p> <p><i>Candidates:</i> Allen, Cathy NT Cheeseman, Alan WA</p>	<p>U16 BOYS JANUARY 11-17 HOBART TCU Larter, John VIC</p> <p><i>Examiners:</i> Baker, Peter WA Franklin, Kerry VIC</p> <p><i>Umpires:</i> Davis, Col NSW Dawson, Rod ACT Pittman, Gary QLD Sibraa, Darren QLD Richardson, Peter WA Toft, Mark QLD Turnbull, Martin ACT</p> <p><i>Candidates:</i> Offer, Kevin VIC Trow, Ron QLD</p>
<p>U19 WOMEN JANUARY 18-24 SYDNEY TCU Sibraa, Tricia QLD</p> <p><i>Examiners:</i> Culpitt, Ken ACT Shephard, Darrell NSW</p> <p><i>Umpires:</i> Boyle, Graham NSW Crowe, Nicole NSW Freeman, Lisa NSW Itzstein, Sue NSW Pittman, Robyn QLD Robinson, Raelene SA Waller, Diane VIC</p> <p><i>Candidates:</i> Randall, Heather NSW Roberts, Dave SA</p>	<p>MEN MARCH 6-12 CANBERRA TCU Koskelainen, Margo VIC</p> <p><i>Examiners:</i> Evans, Leigh VIC Rindfleish, Andrew NSW</p> <p><i>Umpires:</i> Baker, Greg NSW Baker, Peter WA Grove, Debbie VIC James, George VIC McCauley, Damien SA Sibraa, Darren QLD Thomas, Frank QLD Tourangi, Riki NZ</p> <p><i>Candidates:</i> Boyle, Graham NSW Waller, Phil VIC</p>	<p>U23 WOMEN APRIL 3-10 BRISBANE Sibraa, Tricia QLD</p> <p><i>Examiners:</i> Keogh, Debbie VIC Grove, Debbie VIC</p> <p><i>Umpires:</i> Broomhall, Kevin VIC Frame, Ian QLD Houison, Ron VIC Sibraa, Darren QLD Thomas, Frank QLD Toft, Mark QLD Waller, Phil VIC</p> <p><i>Candidates:</i> Pittman, Robyn QLD</p>	<p>U23 MEN APRIL 3-10 SYDNEY McAuliffe, Alan SA</p> <p><i>Examiners:</i> McCahon, Bruce NSW Waller, Diane VIC</p> <p><i>Umpires:</i> Baker, Greg NSW Chapman, Andrew NSW Lawrance, Neville SA Richardson, Peter WA Tannebring, Kevin SA Whitehead, Lindsay VIC</p> <p><i>Candidates:</i> Kahler, Yvonne QLD</p>

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Darren Alford were evaluated for their level 1. It's terrific to see players also having a go at umpiring and succeeding. Well done Bob and Darren!

Finally, congratulations to Dave Searle who attained his level 3 during Winter Competition. Dave is a huge contributor to softball in WA in his various volunteer roles. Congratulations Dave – the work doesn't stop there!

To all the umpires who have recently attained their level 1 or higher – thank you for your dedication to softball. I hope you continue in the program but, most of all, enjoy being part of the game.

Warren Duff (WA State Umpire in Chief)



Level 1 - Darren Alford



Del Graham and Ron Mills. Well Done!

CONCLUSION

We traveled back to Hedland on Sunday without incident and arrived in plenty of time for our flight to Perth.

Although Punmu and surrounding communities are in a very remote area the people have taken to Softball with great enthusiasm. I think the game should be promoted in these areas with the view of forming an Annual Tournament to further advance the game.

I would like to thank WA Softball for the opportunity to attend this Tournament. I am willing to attend further sessions in these areas to help promote Softball and will be available when asked.

Peter Baker (Western Australia) ASF umpire.

BAKER MAKES TRIP TO PUNMU

Below is an extract from Peter Baker's report from a remote Aboriginal community, located in the middle of the Great Sandy Desert. Peter agreed to attend the Punmu Carnival on very short notice on behalf of Softball WA and Department of Sport and Recreation.

TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATION Travel from Perth to Port Hedland on Thursday morning. On arrival we arranged a 4WD vehicle to drive to Punmu. A distance of approx. 600km N/East of Hedland The last 300km was on un-sealed roads. Road surface was in good condition, but would be difficult to traverse in wet conditions.

We arrived at Punmu at 6:00pm and were directed to the house of DSR representative David Peck.

The house was comfortable with all amenities. Sleeping arrangements were crowded owing to the number of people staying at the house. (15 in all.). All persons were self sufficient with their own swag and bedding. We purchased enough food for the time we were there and did not have any problems with meals.

GROUNDS & EQUIPMENT.

The area set out for Softball was a cleared surface of red desert sand similar to a skinned diamond. The surface was ok to play on although a bit soft underfoot. The players (all barefoot) were happy to play in these conditions with no injuries. There were no ground markings other than a crude diamond to mark the in-field. There was very little equipment available other than some fielding gloves, a few balls and two bats. We supplied a set of bases along with some bats, balls and gloves, which were used by all participants.

PARTICIPANTS

We were asked by David to run the Softball Tournament and set up the games. As there were no teams or names at the time, we began by setting up the diamond and then contact the players to arrange teams to run the competition. There were a few people available but we were informed most teams were still traveling and would not arrive till later in the day. As we could not form teams we started a coaching clinic for the players and juniors who were there. The Clinic was ongoing for the rest of the day as people arrived. We decided to run some training games for the players but could not form a competition until the next day.

The next morning we had enough players to start competition with 4 teams and began playing a round robin series with 2 finals the next day to decide a winner. The players were very enthusiastic about the game and showed good skills. Unfortunately we were scheduled to leave the next morning and could not stay to run the finals. DSR people had volunteered to run the remaining games on the Sunday.



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