

Blue's News On-Line

Australian Softball Umpires Magazine

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

October Edition Vol 10 of 2004

STOP PRESS Diane makes her mark at World Uni Games

When given an opportunity grab it with both hands. That is what Victoria umpire Diane Waller did earlier this year. Diane has just returned from a self-funded trip to the United States which took in the World University Games.

After officiating in two warm-up games in Florida Diane was off to ISF Headquarters at Plant City for the inaugural Softball tournament of the World Uni Games.

Diane was the only female umpire in a crew of 16 and performed extremely well. She umpired 11 games in six days which was highlighted by her appointment of plate umpire for 1 v 2 play-off and backed that up with first base on the Gold Medal game.

The World event is held every two years. Diane has paved the way for others to follow with the World University Games surely to be on Softball calendars everywhere. Congratulations on your achievements Diane.

Diane has only been back in the country for a couple of days but she informed BNOL that she will send us her report in time for our next edition.



Diane in action at the plate at the 2004 World University Games

What's in this Edition

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Andrew Rindfleish
National Director

New Direction and Focus

At the recent State UICs and National Staff meeting a number of initiatives were identified to strengthen the Umpire Program. These initiatives will form the basis of a management improvement program and be incorporated into the Umpire Program Operational Plan.

The initiatives were developed after an environment scan which identified which things were being actioned well within the Umpire Program and those which could be achieved better.

Those being actioned well were considered to be:-

- Service to game
- Opened the ISF clinic to observers
- Increase in number of ISF umpires
- Built rapport with players/officials
- Development Programs
- Newsletters (State)
- Umpire Recognition
- Website, including timeliness of information and Blues News on Line

and those that could be achieved better were

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Excessive workloads and lack of recognition in some States
- Succession planning & development (administration)
- Targeting minority groups
- Communication between Softball Australia/States/NUC Staff / SDU's

....Continues Page 2

- Not always following appropriate protocols or procedures
- Documentation - Umpire Orders
- Unrealistic timelines given to SDU's
- Different games - slow pitch, modified games etc.
- Not enough material on the Website
- Risk management problems in the future and current states who have a Zero tolerance policy to share this information with all States and Territories.

The improvement initiatives, twelve in all, cover all Key Result Areas defined in the Softball Australia Strategic Plan.

Sport Delivery

- Updated On Field Mechanics
A series of Technical Bulletins are being prepared to facilitate implementation of new umpiring mechanics identified at the ISF Clinic held in Brisbane in January 2004 and confirmed during the Olympic Games
- Development of implementation of a plan to ensure there are sufficient elite umpires to support both the male and female programs
- Introduction of more modern on field umpire apparel

Governance and Management

- Introduction of a revised National Staff management structure which places greater emphasis on support for domestic issues and succession planning.
- Strengthening of umpire recognition arrangements

Sports Excellence/High Performance

- Implementation of Competency Based Assessment for all umpire levels
- Revision of the Theory Examination delivery to support more flexibility
- Implementation of tactics for keeping umpiring resource material up to date

- Use of the Friendship Series to provide advanced umpire development

Finance

- Development of a model to reduce the financial burden of umpiring on National Championships

Marketing, Awareness and Promotion

- Implementation of measures to further increase the importance of Blues News in communicating umpiring initiatives and practices.
- Introduction of standardised and modern off field apparel

Andrew Rindfleish
National Umpire in Chief

RECOGNITION OF UMPIRES by Andrew Rindfleish

This month I like to recognise a number of individuals amongst us who have been recognised in various ways.

The Board of Softball Australia recently appointed Mark Toft and Sue Itzstein to the National Umpiring Staff.. Mark, from Toowoomba, Queensland, has been the Editor of our Blues' News On Line, since its inception over three years ago. He will continue in that role as a Staff member. Sue, from Sydney, New South Wales, will take on project work, focusing on administration of our domestic umpire program. They join Leigh Evans, from Victoria, as 2004 additions to the NUC. Leigh has been working with Alan McAuliffe in the management of the rules functional area.

Debbie Grove, from Victoria, having satisfied the requirements as laid out in the Umpires' Orders, has been awarded Level 7 certification. Debbie is a very likeable umpire, appreciated for her contribution to any tournament by her fellow umpires and players and coaches alike. Some of you may not know that Debbie actually played softball at National level, having represented Victoria at Under 16 level some dozen or so years ago.

We have two recently appointed State Directors, namely Wayne Clark in Tasmania and Nathan Levy in the ACT. I sure all of us around the country wish Wayne and Nathan all the best in their challenging roles.

At National Awards Dinner two of our stalwarts, Margo Koskelainen and Alan McAuliffe were honoured as ISF Hame of Fame inductees. This was a great night with many umpires in attendance to celebrate with Margo and Alan. A number of other umpires figured in the Annual Awards of Excellence winners, including Neville Lawrance as the Viv Triplett Umpire of the year. Congratulations Nev!

At Softball Australia Ken Culpitt was awarded Life Membership of Softball Australia and Margo was elected into the Softball Australia Hall of Fame.

ISF Hall of Fame Inductees

Margo Koskelainen & Alan McAuliffe

At the Awards of Excellence Dinner ISF Hall of Famer, Vivienne Triplett was asked to say a few words in respect to Margo Koskelainen and Alan McAuliffe. The following is an extract of that speech.

MARGO KOSKELAINEN OAM

When appointed to the position of National Director of Umpiring in 1985, Margo brought to the position a unique combination of skills, experiences and qualities.

Margo was from country Victoria, she had outstanding administration skills and a background in practical on-diamond umpiring, strong rules knowledge and an understanding of the change in direction required in umpiring in this country to bring it in line with international practice.

In just a few short years, she managed to change the face of umpiring in Australia, and has gone on to play a leading role in the International Rules Commission over more than 10 years, and shown the world that Australia's Umpiring Program produces consistent excellence on the diamond. Today, there are many Australian umpires who can be allocated by ISF to any tournament in the world, and the international community and the umpires themselves know that they will perform well.

Margo can be very proud of her achievements. In this country we have had only four UIC's and Margo is by far the longest serving one.

She leaves the position of UIC or National Director admired and respected throughout the International Umpiring World. Margo my friend, you are a worthy member of the ISF Hall of Fame.

ALAN McAULIFFE

I have known Alan since 1969 and have seen him overcome roadblocks and difficulties both on and off the diamond to reach the top in umpiring. It is a mark of Alan's strength of character that he was able to put off some early disappointments to rise to the top.

It takes a particular type of person to become an umpire in any sport. Alan had those qualities in abundance. He combines the highest standard of mechanical and theoretical techniques to umpire our game. But he also brought to his vocation the ability to handle people and to earn their respect by his performance on the diamond, both in accuracy of his decisions and his game management skills.

Alan contributed at all levels of umpiring; however, in the last 10 years his appointment to many world and regional tournaments, both as an active umpire and an excellent clinician throughout the Asia Pacific region, has been pivotal to both the International and National Umpiring Programs.

As in every sport, athletes aspire to be selected to participate in the Olympic Games – whether in the capacity of a competitor or an official. Alan can always be proud of being the first Australian Umpire to be appointed to the Olympic Games in Atlanta, USA in 1996.

Alan announced his retirement from on-diamond umpiring last year, but continues to contribute to the program. Alan – congratulations on becoming a member of the ISF Hall of Fame – we are proud of you.

Finally, It is most appropriate that both Alan and Margo be recognised by induction to the International Hall of Fame at the same time, because I am sure that they will agree that they each could not have achieved what they did without the mutual support of the other.



Two well respected umpires inducted into the ISF Hall of Fame: Pictured L to R: Don Porter (President of the International Softball Federation), Margo Koskelainen OAM, (Inductee to the ISF Hall of Fame), Alan McAuliffe (Inductee to the ISF Hall of Fame) and Bob Leveloff (ISF Vice President - Oceania Region). Mr Porter and Mr Leveloff took time out of their somewhat hectic schedule and were on hand to make the presentation and to induct Margo and Alan into the ISF Hall of Fame at the Awards of Excellence Dinner recently. BNOL would also like to recognise Laing Harrow who was inducted into the ISF Hall of Fame on the gala night.

Ken Culpitt
Citation for Life Membership of Softball Australia

Ken Culpitt has been an active and influential contributor at the national level for softball since 1979.

Most remarkable about Ken 's involvement is that it can truly be considered to be both 'on' and 'off' the diamond. His initial contribution was as part of the national umpiring program and later as a member of the Board of Softball Australia.



Ken's participation in the umpiring program at the national level commenced in 1979. From 1979 to 2004 Ken has participated as an umpire at national championships – never one championship per year but usually 2 or 3 championships per year! Ken's participation during this time reflects his approach to everything – don't limit yourself to one role. At National Championships Ken been an umpire, examiner, UIC, tournament convenor and Softball Australia representative. He has participated at the Men's National Championship every year since 1987 and has attended six World Championships. Ken has umpired an amazing 198 international games during his time on the national scene.

During the mid 1980s Ken broadened his contribution to assist the National Director for Umpiring for a number of years. In 1989 he took on the role of National Deputy Director and National Rules Interpreter. He held these positions until he was elected to the Softball Australia Board in 2001. During this time he played a major role in the development of the strategic plan for the national umpire program and the plan has been in place since 1991. The strategic plan provided a mechanism for evaluation and reporting on the performance of the program and set the standard for reporting on the national performance of the sport.

Ken also assisted Softball Australia to develop a strategic plan for the sport a few years later. He facilitated workshops and assisted in the writing of the plan now in place – a plan that enables the sport to report on its performance as a national body.

Ken was elected to the Board of Softball Australia in 2001 and has continued to contribute to the development of softball as a sports administrator of the highest standard. His work on the Board ensures that the sport balances the big picture with the needs of the players and officials at the grass roots level.

Ken has represented the sport at a number of international forums and his vast experience over the last 25 years ensures the contribution he makes is comprehensive and of value.

Margo Koskelainen OAM
Citation for Softball Australia Hall of Fame

Margo has been actively involved with the development of softball umpiring in Australia for more than 20 years and has umpired at five World Championships.

Under Margo's administration the Australian International Development Programme was initiated in 1990, with some 22 Australian umpires ultimately achieving ISF Certification.

Margo was appointed Deputy Umpire-in-Chief by the ISF for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and Umpire –in-Chief for the Junior Men's World Championship in 2001, the first woman ever to be appointed to the position.

In 2000 Margo received the 'Medal of the Order of Australia' and in October 2003 was elected to the International Softball Federation Hall of Fame. In 2004 Margo was a recipient of the Ausport 'Officials Development Award' in recognition of her work developing umpires at all levels within the softball community.

Margo was elected to the Softball Australia Hall of Fame at the Softball Australia Board Meeting in Melbourne recently and will be inducted by Softball Australia at a time and place suitable to such an honour.



Apology

I know there is hardly any State contributions in this issue but I have had major problems.

Please send all your State articles by November 15 so I can set them in for the November issue.

Thank You for your understanding.

For those who have not received my Email.

I have lost a lot of my work on BNOL and I need you to send me the articles you may have sent me in the last two weeks.

Vivienne Triplett - Australian Softball - Umpire of the Year

Nominations: Leigh Evans - Neville Lawrance

This year's recipient of the Vivienne Triplett Australian Softball Umpire of the Year Award was presented to Neville Lawrance by ISF Hall of Famer, Vivienne Triplett at the Awards of Excellence Dinner recently.

Neville is a Level 7 umpire who has been umpiring for 22 years. He has been umpiring on the National scene since 1991 and since then has umpired at 32 National Tournaments.

Neville is currently the State Director for South Australia and is involved in umpiring training and examinations. Neville is also a member of the examining panel at the National level.

Umpiring highlights include plating the Bronze Medal game of the 1998 Women's World Championships, umpiring at the 1999 Trans Tasman Men's Fastpitch Challenge, umpiring the deciding final of the 2003 American Olympic Qualifier and being appointed as an umpire of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

Congratulation Neville. Congratulations also to Leigh Evans for being nominated for this prestigious award. Leigh's umpiring highlights include being the plate umpire in the Gold Medal game at the 2002 Japan Cup, umpiring on the Championship game in the 2002 and 2004 Open Women's National Championships and attending the 2004 ISF Clinic in Brisbane.



Australian Softball - Administrator of the Year



Nominations: Margo Koskelainen - Ken Culpitt - Darrell Shephard

Australian Capital Territory umpire, Ken Culpitt took out this award from five other nominees (two being umpires with outstanding credentials).

Ken has had a busy 12 months that has seen him hold a number of important positions. Ken is a member of the Softball Australia Board, a member of the National Umpire Staff and the Vic President of Softball Canberra. Ken was a Softball Australia representative at the Open Men's National Championships and a committee member and co-convenor of the Australian Masters.

Congratulation Ken. Congratulation also goes to the other nominees for this award Margo Koskelainen and NSW State Director of Umpiring, Darrell Shephard.

Australian Softball - Site of the Year



Nomination: Softball NSW (Web Master Ryan Benson)

New South Wales umpire Ryan Benson joined the growing number of umpires who have been recognised for their off-field performances.

Ryan is the Web Master for Softball NSW Website and his efforts earned him the Softball.org.au Site of the year.

Updated daily, most use of this website comes when State, National and International events are held at the NSW Softball Centre when play-by-play reports are posted to the site.

The use of images and flash makes the site easy to navigate and all content is up-to-date and relevant. Live updates via video feeds and results have also provided an outstanding website.

Congratulation Ryan you are doing a fantastic job for our sport.

Contributions for BNOL

We encourage that all umpires to take the opportunity to send articles to the editor. Deadline for November issue is November 15.

Send contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

**Road to Athens
UMPIRE REPORT - CANADA CUP - CHAMPIONS CUP - PRE-OLYMPIC
CAMP ITALY - 2004 ATHENS OLYMPIC GAMES**

To start somewhere I was appointed by the ISF to umpire the softball component of the 2004 Athens Summer Olympic Games. As a final preparation for the Olympics I traveled with the Australian team to the Canada Cup, Champions Cup and the Pre-Olympic camp in Italy. This report will deal with all three plus the Olympic games.

CANADA CUP

The Canada Cup was run from 3rd to 11th July with the team departing Sydney 30th June. This was to allow an opportunity for the players to acclimatize and arrangements were made for a pre-tournament game against Canada. This was to have been an opportunity for me to get rid of some cobwebs before the Canada Cup started. Transport became a problem and I was unable to get to the ballpark as I was staying in a different hotel to the team. Still my time was not wasted several long walks covering around 30kms saw me ready to do get back into some softball umpiring.

The Games started at 10:30am except for the first day when we started at 11:00am this however meant that the last game started at 8:30pm. Late nights for everyone by the time we got off the diamond and then the 30-minute drive home. The weather for the week was great for softball staying in the low 20's however I'm told that the organizers were looking for warmer weather to help improve the beer sales.

The crew for the Canada Cup International Women's Fastpitch Tournament was made up of the following umpires: Kelly Hunter, Tonya Ribalkin, Susan Strafford, Brian Sharples, Toyomatsu Tabinuki, Leanne Pacini, Ron Brinkman, Chris Lee, Toshio Saito, Bob Henning, Lor Bish, Wayne Saunders, Greg Pohl and Neville Lawrance. Our TCU for the tournament was 1996 Olympic umpire Mike Hornak. For those of you who are not aware Mike was made famous during the 1996 Olympics when he disallowed the USA home run in the USA V's Australia game by calling the runner out for failing to touch home plate.

My allocations during the Canada Cup consisted of 16 games in total made up of the following: 5 plates; 4 first base; 1 second base (gold medal game) 6 third base. While I thank Mike for his help and assistance during the Canada Cup I was very disappointed with the fact that I only got to work one game with Kelly Hunter and none with Leanne Pacini. This was a disappointment shared by both Kelly and Leanne who I would work with in Athens during the Olympics. We all felt that this opportunity could have been used to allow us to get to know each other on the Diamond before the Olympics.

Immediately after the Canada Cup the team headed down south to Irvine in Southern California venue for the Champions Cup.

CHAMPIONS CUP

It is the intention of ASA to run this competition in conjunction with the Canada Cup in an effort to feed on the success of the Canada Cup. The idea being that International Teams that attend the Canada Cup would travel south to Southern California for the Champions Cup and then eventually on to a proposed third tournament in Oklahoma City. All this hinges on Teams accepting the concept and supporting it. Should the concept be successfully implemented this would see teams like Australia being able to attending three major tournaments over a three to four week period. The ever important cost factor of travelling to the US would then be spread over three high level events.

The Challenge Cup was held in Irvine at the Colonel Bill Barber Memorial Park Softball Complex. The complex has one main diamond and is fully fenced with seating for 250 behind home plate and grassed banks behind and above both benches. The main diamond and the three other diamonds in the complex all had lighting and were used for night games. The tournament is very similar to the Canada Cup in that it has a Junior Tournament as part of the event, this being the Junior Olympic Showcase. A total of 55 games were played in the International or Open Division with 76 Teams playing over 350 games in just over four and a half days. To help this happen four ball-parks were used. Fifteen umpires called the International or Open Division and thirty five umpires worked the U18 or Junior Olympic (JO) Division.

All the umpires stayed at the Atrium Hotel located over the road from the John Wayne Airport. Transport was provided by the local umpires and involved a 10-15 minute drive to the ballpark. While the playing surface on the diamonds was as good as you could find anywhere the off diamond facilities left a lot to be desired. The umpires change room was to be located in the car park and while the first crew had to get changed out of the back of a car a more suitable facility was located. This was in one of the two concession buildings inside the grounds that was not being used. We enjoyed this location while not intended to be a change room for three days with a mobile home being made available for the Saturday and Sunday. While we had the use of the mobile home we changed out in the open under two freestanding shades. This provided us with a very close and open environment for the last two days of the tournament.

Merle Butler was invited to attend as the UIC for the International Division with Phil Gutierrez (UIC Southern California ASA) acting as UIC for the Junior Olympics. While Merle was present for all the International Division games, Phil managed to escape from the Junior Olympics leaving one of his assistant UIC's in charge so he could spend some time at the International Divi-

sion games.

Most of the games proceeded smoothly with very little of major concern outside of an issue that Merle had with the non-calling of illegal pitches. I believe that one of the umpire crews indicated that the pitchers in one game were legal when this was clearly not the case. Merle was not happy with the way some of his umpires were turning a blind eye to the problem. The expectation was that something needed to be done and the ultimatum was issued. Either call the illegal pitch or at least be seen to be doing something about getting the pitcher to pitch legally or face possible non-selection at future events.

The umpire crew for the Champions Cup included Debbi Lauderback from Southern California. Debbi was one of the three American umpires who were going to be working the Olympics and unlike the situation in Canada, Debbi and I worked five out of eleven of my games together. This was the first time that Debbi and I had met and while we developed a good friendship off the diamond we also got the opportunity to get a feel for the way each we umpired on the diamond.

The weather for the Champions was a little warmer than that experienced in Canada with the night games being played in the cool of the evening this offering a little respite. A debrief was held after every game this was usually with Merle but at other times with just the crew. As there was more than one game playing a time it was not possible for Merle to watch all of every game. He did however provide feed back and advise to the umpires on the games that he was able to observe. An assessment report was presented to me by Merle when he got to Athens.

PRE OLYMPIC CAMP – ITALY

The pre-Olympic camp in Italy was arranged between Simon Roskvist and Barry Blanchard. This was to be the second half of a two way exchange. Italy came to Australia earlier in the year as a guest of Australia with the Italians looking after Australia during the pre-Olympic camp.

The journey from Australia to Italy was broken into two segments with a stop over in Singapore. While this still left us with ten hours of flying plus a further three-four hours in terminals on the second day it was very much better than travelling the full distance in one hit. For some that would have meant two or more hours into Sydney then the seven-hour flight to Singapore with whatever time was sent in Sydney.

The end result was we arrived in Italy reasonably fresh and ready to go. Until we discovered that twenty-six pieces of luggage didn't make the full journey to Pisa. Both of my bags were missing and many of the players gear bags were also missing. While we were sure that the bags just didn't get loaded in Munich it was still two and a half days before we saw the bags. This presented all sorts of problems for the players mainly with catches without gear and a gen-

eral shortage of gloves. Clothes, underwear and toiletries were also in short supply with all sorts of apparel being worn by those without.

As part of the recovery from the trip being a free day, the players and officials had the opportunity to go into Pisa and for some, beyond, to see a little of the county. I went into Pisa with the Officials and had the opportunity to see the leaning tower of Pisa. We had lunch at a restaurant that offered a view of the tower as a backdrop. If it wasn't for the hawkers trying to sell watches, pens, sunglasses and just about any thing else one could almost imagine being transported back to a time long ago.

The training facility left a lot to be desired. With no laundry facility at the complex, inadequate accommodation and less than suitable food being offered for elite athletes. Most of the food was served cold whether it was a hot dish or not. While I'm not a nutritionist I'm sure that if we had one on the trip they would have had a fit. The general condition of the rooms were dirty and moldy with cleaning consisting of a wet mop that was used to pickup the dirt and deposit it elsewhere in the room.

The lack of laundry facilities resulted in Sue Tomlinson (team manager) going out in search of a laundry. This she managed to eventually find. The big surprise was that it was going to take two and half days to do the laundry. We eventually found out that the washing at the Laundromat was done by hand hence the time line. So Sue was, after much more searching, was able to purchase some plastic basins big enough to allow us to wash our clothes by hand. It then took up to a day and a half for the clothes to dry on all sorts of crudely erected clotheslines both inside and outside with any open area that was available.

While the facilities were less than acceptable and for the players something that they had never had to deal with it strengthened their resolve and determination to overcome any hurdle. They had to deal with conditions that most had never had to endure before. Things like mice in their rooms, more missing luggage in one hit than they had ever had before, an unclean living environment and a quality of food that was way below normal expectations. The Hilton it weren't.

During our stay the team had four training sessions during the first two days then a series of three games against Italy. These were played one a day with the games timed to coincide with the Olympic timetable. The first game was played at 9:30am with the second and third games being played at 12:00 and 5:00pm respectively.

Italy provided three umpires to assist with the umpiring they were Antonella Garofalo, Giuseppe Laudani and Gianluca Magnani all are ISF umpires who have umpired at International level. This made it possible for us to run a four-

man system and provide me with invaluable lead-in practice for Athens. With Australia wanting no less than a clean sweep the pressure was on for Italy to try and create an upset. While Italy did manage to get progressively closer they were unable to beat the Australians. The third and final game was close to being called off due to some very heavy rain that reduced the diamond to a series of lakes. Some very determined work by the ground crews and umpires managed to have the diamond declared playable thus allowing the third and final game to proceed.

With the best of three series completed it was time to head for Athens and take up my International Softball Federation appointment as one of the twelve International Softball Umpires appointed to officiate at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games.

2004 ATHENS OLYMPIC GAMES

For me the start of the final journey to Athens commenced after the completion of the Italian pre Olympic camp. Due to the fact that I had been with the Australian team up to this time and we were to go our separate ways after our arrival in Athens. I was however to stay with the Australian reserve players until it was time to join the rest of the Olympic Umpires on the 11th August.

We arrived in Athens at tea-time after having flown from Pisa to Rome (1hr) and then on to Athens (2hrs). The most pleasing aspect of this trip was that all our luggage arrived with us. The first priority was to have our accreditation validated then for the team it was off to the village. For Kylie Thomson, Belinda Wright, Zara Mee and myself it was make our way to the accommodation that was to be home for Kylie, Bleinda and Zara for the duration of the Olympics. I was to be a guest for two nights until I could book into the Officials accommodation on the 11th August.

One of the first priorities for the girls was to collect their tickets to allow them to get into the Olympic venue and then the inevitable shopping expedition. I tagged along gaining invaluable insight into the complexities of public transport in Athens. I was also able to get an understanding of the general layout. One of the most important things I discovered was the area where I believed the accommodation for the umpires would be. This was however to be of no value to me when it came time to catch a taxi to the accommodation. The taxi driver would only go where he wanted to driving right past the gates that turned out to be the entrance to the compound insisting that the entrance was at the rear.

After not being able to locate the entrance to the Official's Accommodation Village (one of the best kept secrets of the Athens Olympics) I had him take me to the ballpark. I was able to gain entry because my ID had been validated at the airport on arrival in Athens. Once inside it was a very easy exercise to arrange transport to the Officials Village and return to the ballpark to call a scrim-

mage game between Australia and Canada.

On arrival at the village a number of things were quickly discovered that I had not previously known or realized. The first was that no alcohol would be allowed inside the compound. This restriction was latter lifted, however, with no ice or fridge it made very little difference. The access to any food after 10:00am was not possible as we were to latter find out. Transport, while provided, was very ridged and completely inflexible without 48 hours notice. If we didn't know that the late game was going to finish early 48 hours before hand, we couldn't arrange for the bus to pick us up early.

While it had been arranged for Vincent Maoeng to work the scrimmage game with me. I was unable to locate him and as there was very little time to spare, I returned to the ballpark to do the scrimmage game between Australia and Canada by myself. Then it was back to the village just in time to catch the bus to take me to pickup my Technical Officials Uniform from ATHOC and say a quick hello to Leanna Pacini and to meet Pavel Vychodsky who had just come back with their uniforms. This was to be five-hour process that involved a one-hour bus trip then three hours in a line and then a one-hour trip back to the village.

It is while collecting my uniform that I bump into Merle and his wife Debi who had just arrived and were collecting Merle's Uniform. While we were talking and comparing notes on our exploits thus far, Lelani Okuda and Haruhi Goto came along to join the merry band. All of whom still had their luggage in tow having not yet made it to the accommodation. As Merle was to be staying at a different location and had collected his uniform I stayed behind and waited for Lelani and Haruhi while Merle and Debi went ahead to catch a bus. When Lelani, Haruhi and I got out some 30 – 40 minutes latter Debi and Merle where still waiting for the bus so we eventually got to travel together when the bus arrived getting back to the compound just after 8:00pm, tired and hungry.

As the umpires who had already booked in with the exception of Debbie Lauderback were just getting back from eating when we arrived at the compound. Debbie, Lelani, Haruhi and I went in search of something to eat. This was to become a nightly ritual whereby we would arrive home after the last game and then go out in search of somewhere new and different to eat. The good thing was that Athens offers a huge variety of different restaurants within a short tram ride north or south of the compound. By the time we got back it was time for bed, as we were to get an early morning wakeup call from the Sheriff – Kelly Hunter this became a ritual where Kelly would knock on all our doors every morning.

Breakfast was to become very boring to the point that some almost gave up on breakfast completely. There was no kitchen in the compound so all the

food had to be prepared off compound and then reheated. The scrambled eggs were fine until on morning after eating half my hot scrambled egg I found the second half to be stone cold as in just from the fridge. No more eggs for me. We had bacon that was not too bad it came with cherry tomatoes that had been lightly cooked on a hot plate. Problem was they were served cold - straight from the fridge. Toast was not as we would understand it to be. It was dried bread that had been toasted at some time in its drying process and was in long life cellophane packaging – no toast for me. We had buns not sure of the age but closely related to rock cakes - edible if spread with butter and plenty of vegimite. Long life orange juice, cold croissants, sliced ham, muffins tea and coffee were also provided.

The first full day together in Athens was devoted to an all day meeting at the ballpark. This consisted of a Venue Inspection where some considerable time was sent discussing the infield ground cover that was rolled up on a drum against the leftfield fence in foul territory. The main issue here was the possibility that a ball could get caught up between the roll and the fence and whether or not we would allow a fielder to stand on it to make a catch or play the ball. The problem with the potential for a trapped ball was overcome by changing the way it was covered. The concerns re standing on it was covered by the fact that it was ruled to be the same as a fence and they can stand on a fence so why not the rolled diamond cover

The rest of the day was taken up with general discussion regarding rule interpretation, the Umpire Camera and general mechanics discussion. One of the questions raised re rule interpretation was in relation to the pre-game removal of a DP and the fact that such a move could require several changes to the line-up. This was a problem encountered in NZ apparently and was raised by Wayne Saunders. After some discussion it was pointed out by myself that the reason behind the line-ups being handed over to the UIC 1-hour before game time was to allow TV, media, presentation and scorers to enter the details ready for the game. This has to happen on various computers for TV presentation on the Internet and on the score sheets. To allow major changes to the line-up as proposed would negate the benefit of having the line-ups 1-hour out. It would also be in direct violation of the rulebook in that it only allows for a replacement for an injured or sick player. Provision for a complete change to the line-up is not provided for in the rulebook.

With Henry Pollard not arriving until later that night we finished early leaving work on the Four-Man Rotation to Henry to deliver after the Team Technical Meeting the next day.

Friday the 13th was to be a huge day for all of us. We were up early once again thanks to Kelly and ready to catch the bus at 8:00am. It's a long walk if your late for the bus won't wait. First task of the day was the Team Technical Meeting at 9:00am here we were introduced along with everyone else. The

speeches were made the Video of the Olympic History was watched, the various committees and the membership of each committee that was to be in place during the Olympics were introduced. Merle Butler went over the playing rules that were identified as needing explanation and explained the 25 second clock. At the conclusion of the meeting teams tossed for home team for all the games up to the finals.

Now that Henry was with us it was time to go out onto the diamond to go through the four-man system as it was to be used during the Olympics. Crews were given latitude to change and adopted variations to suite different situations. One of the things that was pointed out was the four-man system was a starting point and while it covers most situations we could change things to better cover plays we felt could occur. Of particular note was a return to the 90-degree angle to the throw on force plays at first base. This is a change from what which is in practice at present where the umpire moves no more than a step or two from the first base foul line or works the 45 degrees from the base. With everyone clear on the four-man system we moved back inside for the distribution of the Mizuno on diamond uniform. This was a long process as not all the items had our names on them and the sizing was of the Japanese version.

After sorting out all the items into fourteen piles and having Cathy Kerr in my ear trying to get us out of the room as a media conference had been booked and they need to get back into the room to set it up. We put away as much as we could in the change rooms not wanting to carry it on the public transport we set of to catch the tram as our bus had departed long ago. As transport had not been booked 48-hours earlier to allow for a late finish to the meeting we had to find our own way back to the accommodation. This was something that we got used to and were very grateful that we were living so close.

On our arrival back at the accommodation after a 1km walk, a two stop tram ride followed by another 1km walk we arrived back at the accommodation at just after 3:30pm. Our bus to take us to the opening was due to arrive at 5:45pm and we had had nothing to eat since breakfast. As it was not going to be possible to go out and eat food get back have showers and get ready for the bus in just over 2 hours. An approach was made to the authorities to have take-away delivered. This was met with a very firm NO. Even an offer to meet the deliveryman at the gate was met with the same response. We had to approach to firstly reception then the sports desk and finally the head of security before a relaxation of the rules would allow one of the volunteers to drive his own car to pickup some pizzas for us. Even then we were sworn to silence so no one else would find out about the pizzas and we had to eat them in the secluded meals area where nobody would see us.

After finally eating and getting ready we went to the opening ceremony in our casual uniform. The ISF executive had previously indicated that they were going casual. This was a fabulous experience and one that will remain as a fond

memory with all of us for many years to come. As will the entire Olympic experience.

At the conclusion of the opening ceremony it was back to the compound and some sleep as we had to get up at 6:45am again. Some of us managed to get 5 hours others got even less, this was to be a pattern that was to apply right throughout the Olympics. The couch in the Technical Committee lounge got a lot of use with numerous umpires using it to catch up on missing sleep. Now I understand why we practice umpiring with minimum sleep during National Championships. The logistics surrounding the transport and the need to have to use secondary transport to go and eat at night meant that early nights were not easy to come by. While it was time-consuming travelling to eat, there was an abundance of very good restaurants offering all sorts of food to cater for all tastes. One of the best and cheapest places we found was just 500 meters along the coast right on the beach with tables just two feet from the waters edge. If you went via the short cut (guards didn't like you arriving via the beach) it was only about a 20-minute walk. The husband and wife team who ran the place were great. They spoke very little English and there was no such thing as a menu in fact it wasn't even a restaurant. We really just left it up to them to feed us and they did a great job with food, drink and a tip costing just 40 Euro for 8 umpires the first time we were there. I think this represented the best value for money in all Athens.

The weather for the games was great and it stayed hot without the great variation in temperature that we experience here in Australia. The evenings were fabulous with cool evening sea breezes to ensure that the night games were played under the best conditions possible. We had two days where 39 degrees was forecast and one of those was the free day after the completion of the rounds and before the start of the finals. While it was certainly great to get off the diamond and have a shower if you worked the morning session games I have certainly experienced more extreme conditions at some of our National Championships.

One of the standout features of the Athens Olympic games was the lack of extra innings games. I believe we only had three or four games go to extra innings with most games finishing inside 2hrs. The changes to the pitching rule and the movement of the home run fence back 20 feet has had a huge impact on the game. We had more safe hits and therefore more base runners which lead to far more exciting games, as teams were required to not only worry about the batter but also had to hold runners to bases or if the opportunity presented it self play the lead runner. This lead to more interesting games for all the umpiring crews with umpires constantly alert to the possibility of a play on a lead runner.

My allocations for the Olympics were very pleasing. With the Australian team playing in three of the four finals it was reasonable to expect that my alloca-

tions would be limited. The fact that I was at first base (Japan – China) on the only final that Australia didn't play in and still got onto the gold medal game despite the fact that Australia were playing is testament enough in itself. I have included a full copy of my appointments in this report.

We had only one injury to the umpire panel and that was Debbie Lauderback. Debbie had a slight calf muscle problem and with some very intensive treatment from the medical staff was back on the diamond two days latter. On of the identified contributing factors was insufficient fluid. This left the muscle tight and unable to function properly and part of the treatment involved a huge increase in the volume of water that Debbie drank. The effects of dehydration are numerous.

While there was one incident that was highlighted on Australian TV as well as half the World (Australia – Chinese Taipei game) it was one of very few contentious issues or calls for the whole tournament. In general the umpiring was very good with very few negative comments coming out of any of the games debriefs that I was involved in. The standard of the Umpire crew was very good although a number of umpires would have benefited from more exposure to Open level International Softball.

In conclusion I would just like to say that the Olympics was a fabulous event full of experiences and memories that will live on forever. Shared with a group of umpires who are very highly respected umpires in their own various counties.

As a group we worked, ate and lived as a unit reliant on each other for support, strength, guidance, encouragement, companionship and confidence. When the going got tough and it wasn't easy all the time knowing that there was somebody to support or offer guidance or being required give that support or help for it wasn't all one way traffic. Sharing together that which so few others have and so few others will. The Olympic experience.

To the many umpires vying for China and 2008 I would say work hard. Make every game you do, whether it's a "B" grade club game or the final of a National Championship matter. The way you approach any game you do is important. While there may be no-one to watch you it's your approach and attitude that you develop in the games that don't matter that come out in the important games whenever and wherever those games maybe.

Neville Lawrance - Australian ISF Olympic Umpire Athens 2004

Letters to the Editor

This letter was received from Mike and Lis Hannelly from New South Wales.

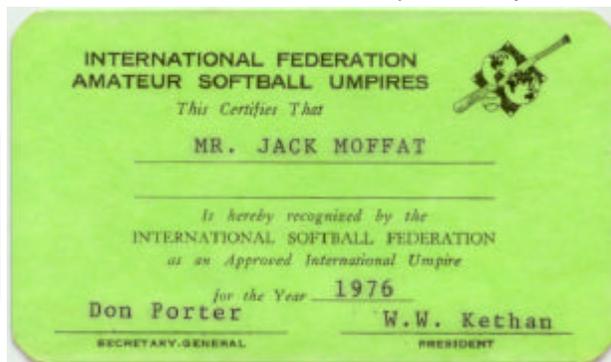
Tofty,

Something for historical interest.

Lis and I were having a few rowdy drinks with Jack Moffatt, who we know through Airport Management, when he presented us with his ISF Accreditation Card. Jack was the airport manager in Port Moresby in 1976 when he received his ISF Accreditation.

It is indeed a small world, and there are ISF accredited umpires everywhere.

Note the name on the bottom left of the accreditation card.



Thanks Mike and Lis it is always great to receive trivia through BNOL. Regards, Tofty.



Diane Waller and her crew at the World University Games at Plant City

Queensland Queensland umpires complete busy representative season

Queensland umpires completed a hectic representative season and are able to report that all umpires have all their arms, legs and heads attached.

Level 4 accreditation was conducted at the Under 19 Men in Ipswich and the Open Men's in Toowoomba. Jamie Harries (Brisbane), Rick Gill (South Brisbane), David Casey (Wynnum) and Matt Blake (Redlands) were all successful in attaining their Level four accreditation.

Finals allocations

Under 19 Women

Championship Game: Stephen Gutteridge, Peter Baxter, Robyn Pittman
President's Cup: Sally Crawford, Neville Baggow, Ron Trow

Under 19 Men:

Championship Game: Frank Thomas, Darren Sibraa, Ian Frame
Presidents Cup: Mark Toft, Helen Strauss, Yvonne Kahler

Open Men

Queensland Cup: Darren Sibraa, Ian Frame, Mark Toft
Championship Game: Helen Strauss,
President's Cup: Yvonne Kahler,

Umpires, umpires and more umpires

Recently many Queensland umpires have been busy officiating QSSSA games and the Junior Andrew's Cup competitions at Downey Park.

Most of these games are in working hours and it is difficult to get a number of Blue umpires to officiate the games.

The call went out to clubbies and I must say that these young ladies and men did a wonderful job. They were enthusiastic and will to learn more about umpiring as the days wore on. If only we could bottle their enthusiasm and get them into the Program we would be looking very healthy in years to come.

I suppose the big incentive and the concentration level will always be there in the QSSSA games as they are only one hour in duration, which enables the none Blues a chance to rest up for 20 minutes and go again.

Mind you Downey Park has been hot over the past couple of weeks and the Blues took every minute of the break to recover and to focus on the upcoming game.

Mark Toft

Western Australia

WA Men's Tournaments

An open invitation to experienced umpires to attend a series of Men's State League Tournaments, to be held in WA on the following dates:

20th and 21st November 2004
11th and 12th December 2004
29th and 30th January 2005
12th and 13th February 2005

The tournaments will feature a number of experienced WA players and invitational eastern states players and should provide a high level of men's softball.

Accommodation can be arranged.

If anyone is interested in attending, please contact
Warren Duff
WA State Umpire in Chief
041 793 8468
warrenduff@tpg.com.au

SuperLeague

The annual Perth Super League Tournament has wrapped up for another year. The brainchild of WAIS coach Kere Johanson, Perth Super League is used as a selection event for the Under 19 Women's and Open Women's teams, to compete at Nationals.

As with previous years, a series of interstate players were brought in and distributed amongst the 5 teams. This years interstate players included Olympic Silver Medalist Sandra Allen and Stacey Porter.

Through the support of the organizers, Neville Lawrance (Level 7 ISF Umpire, Athens Olympic Umpire and SA SDU) was able to also attend this tournament. Neville worked with all the umpires who attended the tournament providing feed back and advice on how they could each improve their games.

Thanks to the following umpires who made themselves available:

- Warren Duff (UIC)
- Neville Lawrance
- Jason Carter
- Danny Wikitoo
- Bill Kilmurry
- Allen Cheesman
- Kathy Garbutt
- Rob Harris
- Graham Bancroft
- Peter Baker
- John Mooy

The finals allocations were:

Grand Final:

Plate: Neville Lawrance
1st: Danny Wikitoo
3rd: Jason Carter

3 versus 4 Play off

Plate: Warren Duff
1st: Allen Cheesman
3rd: Graham Bancroft

My thanks to Neville Lawrance for donating his time and coming over to Perth and to Jason and Kelly Carter for providing the accommodation for Neville. Finally, to the organizers of Super League: congratulations on running such a successful tournament and your support.

Australian University Games

Featuring 8 teams from various local and interstate universities, the Australian University Games Women's Softball competition was held from September 27th until 1st October 2004.

With all the venues within a 4Km radius of Challenge Stadium, the Wembley Baseball Club played host. Due to their being only 8 teams, only one diamond was utilized at 4 different time slots during the first 4 days of competition.

Lorraine Malcolm acted as the Competition Manager, whilst Warren Duff was the Technical Officer.

Umpires who attended the tournament were:

Full Time:

Eddie Walker
Lorain Scott
Albert Dumeresq
Peter Baker

Part Time:

Jason Carter
Bill Kilmurry
Tracey Illingworth

Finals Allocations

Bronze Medal Match

Plate: Albert Dumeresq
1st: Eddie Walker
3rd: Jason Carter

Gold Medal Match

Plate: Peter Baker
1st: Warren Duff

The athletes all appeared to enjoy the competition and the social events that were spread throughout the week of competition. Congratulations to Macquarie University who beat Sydney University in the final to take Gold.

It is with mixed feelings that I would like to inform everyone that Jason Carter – State Admin Officer for the past 2 years – will be leaving WA. Jason has accepted a new role with his current company that will see him relocating to Melbourne.

As the State Umpire in Chief, I will be extremely sorry to see Jason go. His commitment and dedication to driving forward the WA Umpire's Program has been first class. Whenever I was out of the state, Jason was always willing to step up and take charge. His assistance to me has been invaluable.

Jason has also become an integral part of various competitions, including State League, Men's Winter Competition, Dale Districts Men's Competition and SEMSA Women's Competition. His contribution on the diamond will also be sorely missed. Most recently, Jason was allocated 3rd base on the Super League Grand final and has been selected to be a Level 5 Candidate at Nationals 2005.



As a friend, it is exciting to see Jason rewarded for his hard work in the office and to be given a great opportunity to advance his career.

Jason has indicated he will continue in the role as State Admin Officer until just prior to his departure in December 2004.

To Jason and Kelly Carter – best of luck in your new State. You will both be missed and we all look forward to seeing you again soon.

Warren Duff
State Umpire in Chief
Softball WA