

Blue's News On-Line

Official Australian Softball Umpire's Magazine

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au September Edition 9 of 2005

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And the winner is...

Recently Queensland conducted its Awards Night with two blues picking up the major awards.

National Level 5 umpire Ron Trow (Brisbane) was awarded the Tricia Bichel Trophy as the Senior Umpire of the Year.

Junior Umpire of the Year went to Natalie Fleischfresser (Cairns).

The Association of the Year recognised for its development of umpires was won by the Mackay Softball Association. The award accepted by Val Cross.



Pictured L to R: Natalie Fleischfresser, Ron Trow and Val Cross at the Qld Awards Night recently.

Message from the National Director by Andrew Rindfleish

The 2005 State Directors' of Umpiring Meeting was held in Sydney on 27 and 28 August. In addition to the SDUs, the national Umpiring Committee and the National Staff also attended the meeting.

The meeting was opened with an address by Harvey Milson, president of Softball Australia. Harvey generously gave his time to share with the meeting his views on the "state of the nation". Harvey has allowed BNOL to publish his address. I suggest you take a minute to read it as it really sets the focus for the umpiring program.

Harvey's address nicely complimented the theme of the SDU Meeting – "... supporting a changing sport".

Two of the more critical aspects of our umpire program are recruitment and retention of umpires. Both figure regularly in State Directors' reports and continue to be our biggest concerns.

Recruitment is largely seen as a State issue, but clearly the National program is heavily reliant on a membership base at State level. Retention, our ability to keep umpires in our system, is of concern at all levels. Workshops were held to look at how we can improve our success at recruiting and retaining softball umpires.

One of the more critical impacts on retaining umpires is training. We looked at training as being a split responsibility between the States (certainly for Levels 1 to 4) and the national Program.

We conducted two workshops looking at the training of Levels 1 to 4 umpires and Levels 5 and above. It is my intention to have a summary of these workshops in future editions of BNOL.

The next international umpire development program was one of the more keenly debated topics at the SDU Meeting. We looked at ways to deliver this aspect of our program against the back drop of a rapidly changing softball world whilst maintaining the enormous benefits of Softball Australia's recent ISF development squads.

Softball New Zealand have recently finalised plans to conduct an ISF Umpire clinic in early 2006 and has invited Australia's participation. Ken Culpitt's article on the history of ISF umpire development, in this edition of BNOL, makes interesting reading.

Announcements in relation to our international umpire development program will be made as soon as our position is determined.

The following is Softball Australia's President Mr Harvey Milson's address to the recent NUC Meeting in Sydney.

SUPPORTING A CHANGING SPORT

Some years ago in a Bachelor of Business lecture we were challenged with a discussion topic – **“The standing of an organisation will be measured by its ability to manage change”**. Little did we appreciate the impact of change over the next 20 years that would require management?

The sporting industry is no different in that our ability to manage change has become a part of our evaluation process.

WHY IS THE PRESIDENT HERE? Simply because the governance practise the Board of Softball Australia have adopted require that we know what the arms of Softball Australia are doing and support and ensure that the activities are directed to the best interests of the organisation.

I know that it is the first time a President has been asked to address this forum and I trust it won't be the last. Ken (Culpitt), on behalf of the Board has recently spent many hours working with our statisticians in order build a support structure and we will be working with administrators to support their role in the organisation.

- Changes with a direct impact on our industry are those changes that arise out of **a changed demographic** - the decline in field sports – take away sports – drive through sport - competition with other recreational pursuits – cost - etc.
- Government intervention – Sports Commission – AIS – Olympic and International bodies all require change.
- Statutory Intervention – Local Government – Australian Standards – Public Risk – Child Protection and Liability.
- Changes in response to the **demands of our membership**.

I would like to share with you a few changes impacting on our sport and Softball Australia's response and seek your support in managing the challenges:

1. Organisational Change
2. Funding Changes
3. Competition Changes
4. Regional Changes

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

Softball Australia has adopted an **all of sport approach** to the delivery and support of our sport. The Softball High Performance Program (by agreement with the AIS) is no longer focused on the women's program. We have recruited Bob Crudginton from the AIS (Shooting and Gymnastics H P M) as high performance manager with a responsibility for all areas of performance. This will encompass both male and female player identification, training – support and performance. Linked to this is our coaching and support staff identification and training. We have already addressed statisticians – next is team management and then umpires, international / Oceania umpires.

This is the first step to a “softball centre of excellence”.

To better meet the challenges ahead Softball Australia has in the last month restructured. We now have in place a Chief Executive, Administration Manager, Business Manager, Game Development Manager, Communications Co-ordinator, Athlete and Events Administrator and IT Manager.

FUNDING CHANGES

Funding has become linked more closely to performance both on diamond performance and our response to good governance. Policies that now have an impact on our funding are as diverse as Member Protection – Risk Management – Strategic Planning – Child Protection – Indigenous Sport – Heat Policies – Drug Policies – Pregnancy in \Sport Policies.

The withdrawal of Softball from the Olympic Program will have an impact on our sport. To what extent we do not know but we do know that unless ISF can replace the Olympics with a high status event every two years we will not be able to maintain Softball's status as an ‘Olympic Sport’.

COMPETITION CHANGES

Servicing our athlete needs has already led to change. The introduction of the Under 23 Championships has enabled us to take a less formal approach to this Australian championship. State teams, combined State teams, international teams and invitational teams are all able to participate in this event.

The Grand Prix series, primarily a player selection series, provides the opportunity to trial rule innovations and game adaptations for players, officials, statisticians and umpires.

The Friendship Series, primarily a training series for players, coaches and now umpires.

Tendering for championships; combined men and women championships; fixed venue championships; indigenous championships; state of origin are all open for consideration.

REGIONAL CHANGES

While Softball Australia has always been supportive of regional initiatives, the critique that accompanied the withdrawal of softball from the Olympic program sighted as one of the reasons "the failure to respond to the globalisation of the sport". (Softball failed by only one (1) vote to remain on the Olympic Program for 2012)

While the ISF have been able to refute this it is a fact that there were no ISF Oceania (Continental) Championships and qualifying events and that only 18% of eligible athletes in the region participated in qualification events. (Other Regions averaged 34% of athletes)

This is an area that Softball Australia has already begun to address. In July 2005 Softball Australia was instrumental in facilitating the formation of the Oceania Softball Confederation to foster and promote softball in the region. Australia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua and New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Yap are founding members of this confederation.

I would expect that Australia will have a lead role in the region in terms of athlete development and technical development. There are already draft proposals in place for athlete development, umpire accreditation and statistician accreditation.

Although still to be determined, regional qualification (both men and women) could see us in competition against the twelve or so Oceania member countries either in Australia or in other Pacific countries. The Pacific Mini Games, Micronesia Games and other regional championships and competitions will provide opportunities for athletes, officials, umpires and statisticians from Australia.

UMPIRES SUPPORTING A CHANGING SPORT

1. As a first step we will need to ensure our communication lines are open and active.
2. We need to identify and document the role of ISF, Australia and Confederation (regional) umpires and have in place a Charter to support umpires and competitions in Australia and the region.
3. We need to ensure our umpire orders; regulations, procedures and protocols support and are response to adaptation and change. **(There were none available in the Softball Australia office.)**
4. We need to ensure our States embrace and are responsive to change.

THE WAY FORWARD

Softball Australia is to put in place a Working Party to address and document umpire roles and responsibilities including the role of the Oceania UIC, Softball Australia UIC and Confederation umpires in events involving international and national athletes.

While the terms of reference are still to be finalised it is expected that the working party will also consider and make recommendations on existing regulations, orders and instructions having an impact on the umpire program.

Ken Culpitt has agreed to represent the Board and Margo Koskelainen has been invited to represent the ISF. The other representatives will be nominated by the National UIC.

Softball Australia is looking forward to an interesting and challenging year in response to impending changes for our sport.

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you some of the changes and challenges ahead.

Harvey Milson - President Softball Australia - 27 August 2005



HAPPY BIRTHDAY STRAUSSY: Pictured L to R: Adrian Ralph, Martin Turnbull, Ian Bunston, Helen Strauss, Rick Gill, Trevor Pascall (in red and white stripes, of course) Peter Walsh and Alex Turnbull.

CAN YOU HELP FIND TWO UMPIRES?

RON AND CATHY POWERS

Contact

Diane Waller 0409188605 or
dianewal@bigpond.com.au

Where's Trevor?

Following months of speculation and a few senior umpires asking the question—"Where is Trevor Pascall?"

BNOL has done the near impossible, we found him!

He was at the Wynnum Softball Grounds during the Queensland Under 19 Men's State Championships recently while the Blue Crew were celebrating Helen Strauss' 41st birthday.

Good news Trevor will be back on diamond very soon at Wynnum.

Looking at Rules with Alan McAuliffe (National Rules Interpreter)



OVERTHROWS:

A hot smash is past the pitcher's outstretched glove and headed for a single to centrefield. The second baseman's valiant grab behind the base is followed by a miserable throw to first. The ball sails into the stands behind first base and ... that brings us to one of the most used 'rules' in softball. When the ball goes dead, where do the runners go?

- A. Reason for the rule:** Protection of the defence. If it were not for dead ball areas, in some parks when a ball was overthrown, runners could try for six bases; and if it were not for two-base awards (*not 'one-plus-one', which is an old baseball term*), fielders would be insufficiently penalised when they did throw the ball wildly.
- B. Game situations. Play:** B1 singles to right field and takes a wide turn at first. F9's throw goes dead. **Ruling:** B1 is awarded third, two bases from the time of the throw.

Play: With R1 on first, B2 grounds to the shortstop, who throws in time to get R1 at second. The second baseman's throw goes dead. **Ruling:** IF B2 has already touched first at the time of the second baseman's throw, he is awarded third. If, as is most probable, he has not yet reached the base, he goes to second. In either play, though, he is awarded two bases from his position at the time of the throw.

Here's an explanation that may help you keep the rule straight. The purpose of a two-base award is to penalise the defence sufficiently for throwing the ball away. So bear in mind that the award is a penalty. If every runner has already advanced a base before the time of the throw, they have made those bases on their merits. If, subsequent to their own advance, the ball is thrown away, measure the awards at least from the newly attained bases. In a nutshell: The first base they made on their own; the next two bases you give them. It's really simple, when you look at it that way.

Who determines the awards? Generally speaking, the plate umpire has the better view of the diamond. He must maintain field awareness, especially when balls are grounded to infielders with runners aboard.

An important point to remember: Following a base hit, if an outfielder's throw goes dead, you should usually assume that runners have advanced at least one base on the hit and make all awards from those subsequent bases. While that rule of thumb is not always absolutely correct, when it is not, everyone – even the umpire – will have seen a runner hold. And, even if you occasionally blow an award when adopting my suggestion, few coaches will complain, since they too will assume runners made a base on the hit.

BNOL Notifications

As the Webmaster of the NUC my responsibility includes sending out notification that Blues News Online is available for download. Recently, I've received many bounced (returned) emails because the email address either no longer exists or the mailbox is full (which indicates to me an unused mailbox).

Readers of BNOL can send me an email (j.carter@bigpond.net.au) to let me know their new email address or, of they no longer wish to receive the notification, ask to have their address removed from my list.

Be assured that if you are receiving the notifications now and **don't** send me an email, I won't remove your email from the list. However, any email addresses that are bounced for any reason after the next notification **will** be removed from the list.

Thanks for your help,
Jason Carter
NUC Webmaster

Something to think about.....

Unlike the business world that seems to be taking over sport, there are a lot of sporting factors that cannot be predicted, controlled, perfected or eliminated. That's what makes sport the wonderful experience that it is.

The fallibility of the officials, like the fallibility of the players, is part of the beast. To try to change that state of affairs reduces the enjoyment factor for all concerned.

BAD HABITS

Sitting behind a couple of nuns at a softball game (whose habits partially blocked the view), three men decided to badger the nuns in an effort to get them to move.

In a very loud voice, the first guy said, "I think I'm going to move to Utah, there are only 100 nuns living there".

The second guy spoke up and said, "I want to go to Montana, there are only 50 nuns living there."

The third guy said, "I want to go to Idaho, there are only 25 nuns living there."

One of the nuns turned around, looked at the men, and in a very sweet, calm, voice said, "Why don't you go to hell. There aren't any nuns there."

Senior Umpire Development By Ken Culpitt

When an umpire achieves any new level it is said that it is not an end but rather a new beginning. This is no less true for Level 6 umpires.

Australia has one of the International Softball Federation's (ISF's) strongest national Umpire Programs. As Level 6 umpires progress, their development may reach a stage where they are invited to participate in an international umpire development program. Folklore suggests the program concept was conceived during a late night phone call between Margo Koskelainen and Ken Culpitt in mid 1989 when the second generation Umpire Program was very much in its infancy. Australia's first ISF Hall of Fame umpire, Vivienne Triplett, joined Margo and Ken in the design and development of the program. Their ongoing effort has taken the development program to where it is today.

An initial elite squad was formed in 1989 and a development clinic was held before and during the 1990 Women's Open. Clinic sessions covered break through material on nutrition, hydration and the psychology of officiating as well as the traditional rules knowledge and mechanics components. Seven of the group under the guidance of Margo and Ken self funded travel to British Columbia where they attended further classroom clinics and were assessed by senior umpires from Canada and the United States.

International umpire development squads were identified in 1994, 1997 and 2002. Thirty umpires in total have participated in development squads with twenty-two gaining International certification. Four have officiated at Olympic Games and four others have attended one or more Open World Championships. An additional five have attended Under 19 World Championships. All but five have gained opportunities to officiate outside of Australia either with national touring teams or in umpire exchanges.

New Zealand umpires have been participants at all but the first development clinic. In 1994 and 1997 New Zealand Softball sent one participant and, in 2002, five NZ umpires contributed to the group experience. The presence of New Zealand umpires has contributed significantly to the international development value of the clinics.

Australia and New Zealand have a successful umpire exchange program that supports the each country's developing international umpires. Each year the exchange allows a New Zealand umpire to attend an Australian event and an Australian umpire to attend a New Zealand event. The exchange has been in operation since 1993.

International Umpire Development Squads

1990 - Toula Connolly (SA), Denise Overton (Culpitt) (QLD), Alan McAuliffe (SA), John McAuliffe (SA), Cathy Power (VIC), Andrew Rindfleish (NSW),

Patricia Bichel (Sibraa) (QLD), Steve Suckling (WA), Matthew Gowty (NSW).

1994 - Bruce Burford (SA), Rhonda Scammell (VIC), Darrell Shephard (NSW), Peter Baker (WA), Derrin Clark (TAS), Matthew Gowty (NSW), Kerry Franklin (VIC), Lyn Caudle (WA), Vance Foster (NZ), Albert Evald (PNG).

1997 - Kerry Franklin (VIC), Debbie Grove (VIC), Karen Kuhn (QLD), Neville Lawrance (SA), Leon Leach (QLD), Damien McCauley (SA), Lesley Steedman (NSW), Peter Baker (WA), Derrin Clarke (TAS), David Crowe (NSW), Likky Edge (NZ).

2002 - Leigh Evans (VIC), Sue Itzstein (NSW), George James (VIC), Debbie Keogh (VIC), Bruce McCahon (NSW), Diane Waller (VIC), Lindsay Whitehead (VIC), David Crowe (NSW), Denise Overton (Culpitt) (ACT), Darrell Shephard (NSW), Sandy Adams (NZ), Michael Smeath (NZ), Stuart Hodges (NZ), Glen Naplea (NZ), Nicola Ogier (NZ).

The Changing International Umpiring Scene

The international umpiring scene has changed substantially through the 1990s and into 2000 predominately driven by standards required to support Softball at the Olympics. Prior to the mid 1990s nations nominated umpires for ISF accreditation based on their own assessment. A major change has been that senior ISF umpires, most often the ISF UIC, Merle Butler, now attend regional clinics, provide lectures and assess umpire suitability for ISF certification.

In this context of beyond 2000 Australian umpires undertake international participation through formal clinics, evaluation in domestic national and international competition and through travel with national touring teams or on international exchange.

The formal clinics include a technically focused component delivered by ISF and a skills and competency clinic which prepares the umpire for a broader range of participation and contribution predominately off diamond. This additional component provides a development stamp that separates out the Australian Program and its developing umpires. The broader clinic has preceded the technical clinic.

As the third generation of the Umpire Program takes shape it is responding to important drivers of change including the change framework being implemented by the Softball Australia President, Harvey Milson and his Board, the creation of a South Pacific Confederation and the decision by the International Olympic Committee not to include Softball in the 2012 London Games. A key consideration in all aspects of Umpire Program change will be how that change better allows umpiring to serve the Sport.

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'Bloody mongrel' ... but a bloody good one

by Cathy Reid

(Article extracted from Officiating Australia Newsletter July 2005)

Being referred to in a strangely affectionate way as that 'bloody mongrel' is something Neville Lawrance has come to accept after 23 years as a softball umpire.



Umpiring has been an all-consuming passion that began one quiet, sunny Saturday afternoon when Lawrance went to watch his wife, Rosie, play softball. Two decades later he has the unwavering reputation as one of Australia's best and fairest softball umpires, with an Olympic Games under his belt.

'I was initially roped in as assistant coach, but then my work conditions changed and I wasn't able to get to training any more. By that time I was hooked so I turned to umpiring,' Lawrance said.

The 52-year-old, from Modbury Heights in Adelaide, had always had an interest in umpiring and had been a basketball official for ten years. At the root of his dedication was a desire to see fair play.

At first he had no burning ambition to rise up the ranks of officialdom, but rather took it 'one step at a time'.

However, he was driven to be better and took every opportunity to improve his style. This meant moving to stronger competitions and always taking on new challenges.

His first foray into umpiring at the national level came in 1991 at the under-16 nationals in Hobart.

'In a word, that was scary,' Lawrance recalls. 'It was a whole new ball game. Six examination games over four days, umpiring with other officials I'd never met before and controlling games with players I didn't know.'

But one of the biggest differences was encountering coaches who had a good knowledge of the rules of the game, or who at least thought they did, and were not afraid to let the umpires know about it.

'They were a lot more forthright in questioning calls and that was quite intimidating at first.'

The scrutiny of his umpiring did not faze Lawrance for long and he quickly discovered the upside of being at a major event.

'The camaraderie among the officials is absolutely fantastic and I look forward every year to meeting up with these guys. Some of them you don't see for three or four years and you just pick up with them straight away.'

Lawrance gained his International Softball Federation accreditation in 1997 after attending an umpire development clinic over three days.

'It was a camp environment and I found out how much I didn't know. I learnt about things I'd never even thought of, like how you can control your adrenaline levels so you can perform at your optimum level. A whole new world opened up.'

His first overseas trip was to New Zealand on tour with the Australian under-19 team.

'All of a sudden I was out of my comfort zone in a different environment and for the first time I found myself attached to a team, whereas before I'd never had that affinity.'

'Of course, when you get out on the diamond you still have to be very impartial.' It was in New Zealand where Lawrance was first introduced to a different style of umpiring, which was a four-man rotation system. It was a system he recommended be introduced back in Australia at some major events.

Lawrance quickly made a mark on the international scene, which led to the highlight of his career so far — being appointed to umpire at the Athens Olympics in 2004.

'I found out when I was at work and I was walking on air, floating around the office. It was just fabulous.'

While he was a little disappointed with Athens itself and the lack of crowds at the games, as far as officiating goes, he says it does not get any better.

'It's the biggest stage any team or player can strive for and as an umpire the pressure is like nothing I'd ever experienced before.'

'It's not something you can prepare for or practice. You just have to have it in you to step up a notch.'

'That said, you still have to try and treat it like an ordinary game and stay relaxed. That's really the key. All the experience you've gathered over the years is going to kick in and help you make the right decisions.'

Not everyone is always going to be satisfied with those decisions, and over the years Lawrance has learned to roll with the criticism and take it in his stride.

'A lot of it is gamesmanship. A coach may make a big scene by challenging a decision, but we know, and they know, it's not going to change anything.'

'A lot of times it's all about the coach being seen to be standing up for their girls. Even though it's not going to make a difference, they can go back to the dugout and mutter "bloody mongrel" and their team feels like they're doing something.'

Because he approaches every game the same way, Lawrance knows there can never be any question marks over his integrity.

'It gives me the utmost satisfaction going out and knowing I've done the best job I can. It's a great feeling to know that you've provided a service that has allowed a game to happen.'

It is something he is keen to pass on to others.

'There's so much you can do and achieve as an official. There are so many steps up the ladder and the world really is the limit.'

And if anyone is proof of that it is Neville Lawrance ... and he is happy to concede that a thick hide and a bit of an ego can only help.

BNOL readers can download the complete Australia Official Magazine by going to Website www.ausport.gov.au/officials.asp

Tasmanian's having a quiet time

Tasmania

Tasmanian State Director, Wayne Clarke is hoping that he and his umpires will be busy at the end of the month with the Tasmanian Masters Tournament.

Organisers are hoping to gain former players and (umpires) to be involved over the September 30 - October 2 weekend in Hobart.

Readers of BNOL who will be in Hobart during the abovementioned dates and wish to assist by officiating contact Wayne Clarke.

Umpire's walkout uniform

As you are all aware by now the walking out uniform now consists of the following:

New Off Diamond Polo Shirt – Available from Softball Australia (order form is on the website)

Taupe Blazer – from January 2006 is the only Blazer to be used
If you have already placed an order for the Taupe Blazer then you do not need to read any further. Attached you will find an order form and size chart for the Blazer could you please note the following:

- Return all orders to Sue Itzstein 22/110 Reynolds Street, Balmain NSW 2041 or fax to 02 9555 7070 – only e-mail if you have electronic signature for the credit card information this is required by the supplier.
- All payments will be deducted as follows: \$200.00 will be charged by the supplier and \$50.00 will be charged from Softball Australia. So if you intend to pay by cheque please supply two cheques one made out to: Classically Corporate for \$200.00 and one made out to Softball Australia for \$50.00.
- Please return all orders as soon as possible to save any last minute rush. Deadline is October 24, 2005.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to either e-mail me or contact me on 0415 986881.

Kind regards
Sue Itzstein
National Staff

Ethics in Sport Newsletter - Autumn 2005

Australian Deputy Director Tricia Sibraa contacted BNOL to inform us of the updated website which is listed below.

"Hopefully this might be good for all States to know and what they should be doing. It is all the latest information in regard to updated child-protection legislation: Working with Children Checks, in all States."

"With so much emphasis placed on ethics in sport these days this website is worth a look by all State committee members.

www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/newsletters/news_autumn_2005.asp#children

QLD umpires busy at State Championships by David Casey

It has been a busy time since the beginning of August with Queensland Umpires staffing four State championships with another two being conducted in at the end of September and the Open Men State Championships being conducted in November.

The following umpires were successful in achieving higher levels during the State Championships:-

Under 16 Boys – Ipswich – September
Level 3 - K. McIntyre (Ipswich), B. Riddell (Brisbane).
Level 2 - A. Crouch (Logan), C. Warnock (Ipswich)

Under 16 Girls – Rockhampton – September
Level 3 - E. Kaddatz (Bundaberg), N. Fleischfresser (Cairns)
Level 2 - M. Vorhauer (Brisbane), B. Pohle (Brisbane)

Under 19 Men—Wynnum—September
Level 4 - P. Walsh (Brisbane)
Level 3 - P. Baxter (Mackay)

Finals Allocations are as follows:-

Softball Queensland Masters

Men's Division 1	P. Walsh, P. Baxter
Men's Division 2	M. Nilsson, J. Dyer
Women's Division 1	I. Frame, S. Crawford
Women's Division 2	R. Trow, B. Pohle
Women's Division 3	I. Goodman, D. Skellern
Women's Division 4	I. Bunston, A. McIntyre
Women's Division 5	K. McIntyre, T. McGloughlin
Women's Division 6	E. Brown, J. Jansen

Open Women

Queensland Cup	S. Gutteridge, R. Pittman, M. Turnbull
Championship Game	I. Goodman, R. Trow, H. Strauss
President's Cup	P. Walsh, K. McIntyre, P. Gierke

Under 16 Girls

Championship Game	R. Trow, N. Baggow, J. Taylor
President's Cup	C. Baxter, C. Edards, B. Davison

Under 16 Boys

Championship Game	M. Gorman, B. Riddell, D. Skellern
President's Cup	A. Ralph, K. McIntyre, S. Grigsby

Queensland

Under 19 Men

Championship Game	Y. Kahler, M. Toft, H. Strauss
President's Cup	D. Casey, A. Ralph, A. Turnbull

Under 19 Women

Championship Game	S. Gutteridge, R. Trow, B. Davison
President's Cup	I. Goodman, S. Crawford, K. McIntyre

FIRST MEETING OF NEW QLD UMPIRING COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Queensland Umpiring Committee was conducted on Wednesday, September 14, marking the first since the most recent appointments by the Softball Queensland Board.

Re-appointed State Director, Darren Sibraa, welcomed the most recent "rookie", David Casey, and acknowledged the contribution of retiring members, Ron Trow and Tony Whitchurch. A number of initiatives have been planned for the coming year, with the focus on basic clinic delivery presenting its own challenges. Darren outlined the distribution of responsibilities for the committee as:

Darren Sibraa - State Director - Administration
Yvonne Kahler - Training & Development
Helen Strauss - Events - Delegate to the EOC
Ian Bunston - Special Projects
David Casey - Communications/Media
Ron Yardley - State Championships

SPRING CLINICS

A number of basic training clinics are being arranged through September - November, which is a positive response to the commitment by the District Associations to promote umpiring from the 2005 Combined Technical Directorate Forum. Clinics have been requested from Toowoomba, Hervey Bay, Woorabinda (encompassing Rockhampton and Emerald), and Springwood (Brisbane).

Contributions for Blue's News On-Line

Do you have something of interest regarding umpires, both on and off the field?

We'll do something about it! Send your news and a picture (if possible) to the editor of Australia's Official Umpiring Magazine, Blue's News On-Line. Deadline is the **15th of each month**. Remember BNOL is written by umpires for umpires so get involved.

Contributions - mtoft@ozemail.com.au

Palau – a test of patience by Margo Koskelainen

This is a personal note on the visit to Palau for the South Pacific Mini Games undertaken by Neville Lawrance, Michael Hannelly [Chief Statistician] and myself in July/August of this year. Neville conducted an Umpire Clinic and Michael was to teach scoring.



There are a great number of 'war stories' to tell which, if written, would lose a lot in the translation. So, between Neville, Michael and myself there will be lots to tell in the months to come.

Palau is in the western Pacific, situated near the equator [this gives a clue to why there is so much geographic information about Palau in this narrative]. It is an archipelago of about 200 islands. It is around 500 miles east from the Philippines with a two hour flight from Manila and is a 2-hour flight south-west from Guam.

The islands that make up Palau are encompassed by a fringing reef. Beyond the reef the continental shelf drops away dramatically to really, really deep water. The country has a land area of only 188 sq. miles, extends more than 100 miles in a roughly north-south direction and is about 20 miles from east to west.

The larger islands are volcanic and have rich soils and ample water. The southernmost islands are small uplifted coral structures – limestone in effect. I was told that these little islands are really the tops of an undersea mountain range. Seeing the tops of little islands you can believe it too.

The climate is tropical and humid with the average high temp. being around 81.5°F. There is little variation in temperature. Annual rainfall is about 150 inches. Both Neville and I are sure it all fell while we were there [see Paragraph 3].

We had time to visit the museums [we are not kidding about it raining lots]. The Spanish were the first Europeans to land on the islands in 1710. Germany purchased the islands from Spain in 1899. In 1914 the islands were lost to Japan during WW1 and the Japanese made Palau its headquarters for Micronesia bringing large-scale economic development and urbanization to Koror, the main island, during that time.



Scuba diving and snorkeling are the major attractions as the ocean is as clear as glass and coloured fish are everywhere. The biggest numbers of tourists

are the Taiwanese, around 20,000 yearly, with the Japanese and Chinese coming in after that. Americans, Australians, Dutch, Kiwis and Koreans are also frequent visitors but not to such an extent.

Education is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 14 and is based on the American system. However, in addition to attending school, the children are required to do weekly volunteer community service – their choice of what they do, a list is provided. It is signed off by a supervisor at the respective community establishment.

The head coach of the Palau men's team is a senator, a very rich man and very influential in the whole scheme of things on the island as is his wife. Unfortunately, all the umpires were very much intimidated by him and could/would not challenge him in any way eg. charged conferences, team changes etc.

However, the community as a whole is very conscious of the need they have for each other, because if they do not work together for their country the whole structure of their society will collapse and they will be back to the fragmented administration of tribal villages.

Motor vehicles come in all shapes and sizes and are both left and right hand drive – some coming from Japan and some from the US. It is quite un-nerving being in the middle of the road [no lines marked] with the driver next to the edge of the road.

I was not joking when I said that it rained for 17 of the 18 days we were away. As with all tropical places it doesn't gently rain - it buckets down leaving a lot of water lying around.

We were so short handed during the tournament for workers that, after the first two days, the Softball Competition Manager, Bradley Kumangai, a policeman, went and commandeered prisoners from the jail to help us get the playing field up so that we could play. Until their arrival, Neville and I were counted as ground staff. The prisoners remained with us for the rest of the tournament – Bradley signed them out each morning and delivered them back to jail, sometimes after midnight.

Neville and I, [using our experience from Fujianomyia], taught everyone to use big slabs of sponge to soak up the water and, squeeze it into wheelbarrows or buckets. Bradley had acquired several foam mattresses for this purpose. Neville also taught the Palauns how to get the tarps out quickly.



Nobody moves or acts very quickly in Palau and even seeing Neville and I running for the tarps

only motivated a few to act likewise. Thank the Lord that no-one had a video camera on us, but we do have pictures. We had about 10 tarps in all with one really big one that took two of the men's teams and all of the 10 ground crew together to move it. Neville showed them how to run this tarp from home plate to the outfield without letting all the water run onto the infield – he was exhausted after the first day. He will tell you he got fitter as each day passed.



In reality it did not make one scrap of difference how quickly we got them out, the rain was so heavy and came in so quickly that everything was very wet by the time they we had them all out. We were lucky towards the end of the tournament, we could judge when the rain would start and act accordingly so in the main the infield was dry on most occasions. Except at night when more than once we were well and truly caught.

Lots of the high school kids opted to work as volunteers for the Mini Games [as their community service]. Great in theory. Our softball volunteers turned up Day One and, after asking them to help with the playing field [raking, sponging and marking], we did not see them again until the last day when they wanted Bradley to sign their forms. Not likely.

While there are some dedicated umpires in Palau [Alan and I worked with two of them in 1997, Toby and Xavier, at the Arafura Games in Darwin and Alan again in 1998 in Palau] they have not improved as everything is self-perpetuating, style of play, umpiring, the lot, because they have nothing on which to base improvement.

Everything concerning umpiring is haphazard and 'island carefree' and, more to the point, no-one really cares if this is the case [too hot]. Smart, brisk and professional is not something that is a high priority. Neville in his shorts and sandals at home plate was more the professional umpire than any of the others.

Most interesting was the umpires' attitude to game assignments. Arbitrary changes, made between themselves and with no reference at all to the person who may have prepared the assignments, was the norm.

After suggesting that this was to be done, it stopped – for one whole game. It didn't take us long to understand the reason they wanted the game assignments early was so they had enough time to work out who was swapping with whom.

Neville, at the Umpire Clinic prior to the tournament, was given a lot of names of umpires who would work the tournament but, again, there was an island

catch to it.

Some were coaches and some players who were in the SPMG, some who umpired during the regular competition but were not available for the Games, some were working and not available until the last game [scheduled for 6:30pm if all had gone well], some after 2:00pm, some had to teach night classes so were not available on Monday, or Tuesday – the list is endless.



What was really frustrating was that we only had 4 people who were prepared to do plates – we found this out after we assigned one of them to a plate who said, 'Ohhhh no, not me, I don't do plates. Leo can do it!'

We got wise about then and asked if there was anyone else who did not do plates. You know, there is a danger to asking questions. You should not ask questions if you don't want to hear the answer.

However, when all is said and done the great thing about the Pacific Island people is that they play love to play softball. It may not be the best we have ever seen, and probably it never will be, but every player just loves being involved and playing the game.

The men play hard, hit the ball a long way, run hard and hit the ground hard. Best of all every one of them plays honestly, including the pitcher. The pitcher complies with the pitching rule. Oh, how refreshing that was I cannot begin to tell you.

In fact, they all play honestly. No-one tries to cheat. The batters get in the box with the express purpose of hitting the ball hard and running - fast.

This was the first time that the women played fastpitch and it was painful to watch at times but they had fun and wanted more. All the women's teams stayed and watched the other games and applauded good plays etc.

With more coaching opportunities the women will get better. Even now, some of the men's teams are talking about working with their respective women's team so that the girls can work towards better skills and perhaps medaling.

Michael, geared to train up some scorers who unfortunately did not arrive, carried the burden of not only scoring every game but updating the website as well. He was really chuffed when he was told that softball had the best update record of any sport at the games.

Because we could not fly out until the Saturday after the tournament, the local umpires took Neville and I around to show us all the historical sites the day after the competition ended.

The local Olympic Committee hosted the foreign sports administrators on a day trip to the 'Rock Islands' for a swim and a BBQ.

We had a great day and this was where I learned most of what is above from one of the local softball guys who came along to help with the day. Neville and Michael swam with fishes and also with the jellyfish in an isolated mountain lake which they had to hike up to and back. Me, I stayed on the island, talked with the locals and took pictures.

But Neville did say that it was a magical, fairy-like place and very beautiful. Michael said the hike up to the lake and back was XX@@###!!! awful.

There are hundreds more stories, but we will save some for when we get together.



Someone had to sit on the bench: Neville support crew from left, Harvey Milson (President, Softball Australia), Michael Hannelly (Chief Statistician), Margo Koskelainen (Oceania Representative)

From Page 5 Senior Umpire Development

The Softball Australia President has commissioned a review of umpiring delivery in the South Pacific from an Australian perspective. A working party is soon to be established. Harvey told the recent national umpiring meeting that 'Ken has agreed to represent the Board and Margo has been invited to represent the ISF on the working party'.

The State UICs and National Staff have considered how the international development program might need to look in the future. They recognise the value of the established development program components and are keen that each of these aspects continues to evolve and remain a part of an Australian umpire's international development.

This decision is timely as a new development squad is ready for identification. The National UIC, Andrew Rindfleish, has approached current Level 6s for their interest in participating. Complete details of the arrangements for the next International Development Squad are being finalised and once ratified by the Softball Australia Board will be distributed by Andrew.

Our New Zealand counterparts are holding an ISF technical clinic in early 2006 and the recent national umpiring meeting reached consensus that Australia should send some participants. This reciprocates the past New Zealand contribution to Australian clinics. Identification of who might attend from Australia is under way.

Two New Level 1s for WA

Western Australia

Congratulations to Sean Smith-Wever and Shaun Illingworth, for obtaining their Level 1 Umpiring Accreditation. The award was presented after the Dale Districts grand final on September 17.

Both young men were members of the 2005 WA Under 16 Boys team, with Sean also being a member of the 2006 team to compete in Perth. Thanks to Bill Kilmurry and other umpires who assisted with their training.

Season over for Dale Districts

The 2005 Dale Districts Men's league has drawn to a close. With two time slots being played every Saturday afternoon at Langford Reserve and – for the second year running – night games being played on Friday and Saturday nights, it was a long season for all. There were 510 slots covered over the course of the season.

Bill Kilmurry acted in the capacity as Tournament Umpire in Chief working with the Dale Districts committee to service the needs of the competition.

Thanks must be extended to Allan Collings and the Dale Districts Committee for providing a small gift to all umpires. The stubbie holder and towel will certainly come in handy next season – if not before hand.

The Division 1 best of three series was umpired by:

Game 1 - Warren Duff, Bill Kilmurray, Kathy Garbutt

Game 2 - Bill Kilmurray, Rob Harris, Warren Duff

Game 3 - Warren Duff, Ronie D'Fleur, Bill Kilmurray

Thanks to the following umpires who helped out over the course of the season: Graham Bancroft, Kyle Byrne, Ronie D'Fleur, Annie Daveson-Kelly, Warren Duff, Tyson Duncan, Mike Ferrari, Brooke Forde, Kathy Garbutt, Steve Gunter, Rob Harris, Shaun Illingworth, Tracey Illingworth, Richard Jupp, Bill Kilmurray (UIC), Jack Middleton, Ron Mills, Dave Roper, Sean Smith-Weaver, Adam Stoker, Darrel Vince, Amy Walker, Matthew Walker, Danny Wikitooa, Denika Willison.

Get Well Ron Mills

Best wishes to Rob Mills - South East Districts Softball Umpire's Association member – who is in hospital recovering from broken vertebra, sustained during a work accident. Ron's biggest disappointment is not missing work but the fact that he will not be able to umpire softball or baseball until after December. Wishing you a speedy recovery Ron!



Umpires in NSW have been very busy over the winter months – who said we get a break?

New South Wales

UNDER 16 STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Under 16 State Championships were held on 21st and 22nd May at Macarthur Association in Camden. Scott Rindfleish was the UIC and was kept very busy over the weekend with problems from too much sun – in the morning play on diamonds on one side of the park was held up by the rising sun and in the afternoon the other side of the park had problems. Even the finals had to be delayed because of the setting sun being in the eyes of the players.

We had the pleasure of having two umpires from New Zealand visit us for this weekend. Mark McFarlane who recently umpired at the Junior Boys World Championships in Canada and Dave Beaumont travelled across the ditch to umpire at the event. Both these guys paid their way to Sydney to get some valuable experience. It was a great opportunity for me to catch up with these two blokes who I umpired with in New Zealand. Also it was good experience for NSW umpires to work with umpires from another country and to talk about how things are done in the “land of the long white cloud”.

Examinations for level two were held and Ben Medbury from Orange and Brent Jordan of Georges River were successful - well done Brent & Ben.

In the girls championship Manly Warringah defeated North Shore in a very close game. Greg Baker was on the Plate, Kyira Cox at First and Greg Zucchetti at third. The boy's championship was taken out by Macarthur over George River. Ross Harrison was on the Plate, Mark McFarlane on first and Wendy Boyd at third.

Under 19 State Championships

On the weekend of the 16th and 17th July the Under 19 Female State Championships were conducted at Blacktown Olympic Park where Level three candidates began the first part of their assessment. Graham Boyle led the troops over the weekend. The final was between Sutherland and Georges River (Sutherland winning a very tight game one nil) and the crew was - Darrel Shephard on the Plate, Sue Itzstein at First, Scott Rindfleish at Second and David Crowe at Third – yes that's right Crowie's made a comeback. Great to see you back on the Diamond David.

This was followed a week later with the Under 19 Male State Championships held at Kempsey. What great weekend this was. Thirteen of us travelled to the North Coast for the event. Sue Itzstein was the UIC and was accompanied by half a dozen of us who travelled by bus whilst the rest of the crew elected to travel by car. Like a good leader Itzy did all the driving – up and back. We had a great weekend – it really is good to get out to the bush and have a chance to

get all the crew together for dinner and a jot of laughs. Let alone experience the hospitality of the people up North.

The final was between Penrith & Macarthur with Penrith winning. Bruce McCahon was on the Plate, Scott Rindfleish at First, Amanda Houison at Second and Ron Houison at Third.

At the end of the weekend we had two new Level three umpires – Matt Hayes from Sutherland and Peter Medbury from Orange. Matt did it the hard way being examined at the male championships whilst Peter did his over the women and men. Congratulations Matt & Peter.

WARATAH LEAGUE

This League is virtually Division 2 of State League and is used as a training ground for Level 1 Umpires. This year the organising committee decided that teams should nominate a least one umpire to travel with their team during the league and umpire the games when their teams played. The women's division started on the weekend of 6th & 7th August and the Men on 27th & 28th August.

This has been a very intense league and the Women's Finals series was played last weekend with Hills winning the event. Umpires who worked the finals series were Leanne Gearside, Peter Medbury, Greg Zucchetti, Jim Long, Sharyn Girdler, Vicki Lansley, Geoff Fox, Wendy Boyd, Matt Hayes, and Shontell Smith.

Leanne Gearside called the balls and strikes on the final with Peter Medbury at first and Greg Zucchetti at third.

The men's division is still in the round robin stage with the finals series set down for the weekend of 19 & 30 October.

FUNDRAISER

In the middle of this NSW SUA held its inaugural “Magic Show and Trivia Night” at Deepwater Motor Boat Club. Thanks to great organisation by Scott Rindfleish and Sue Itzstein we had a very successful night and managed to raise much needed funds that will be used for development of Umpires in NSW. Adam Dean, the very talented Magician, put on a great show and was ably “assisted” by Kerry Benson – we just did not know what she was going to do next.

Over a hundred and twenty people attended on the night and a special thanks to all those who donated either their time, money or prizes that helped make the night a tremendous success. Many Companies and individuals put their hand in their pockets to help out – THANKS.

Bruce McCahon - Information Officer - NSWSUA

Come Celebrate John Larter's 25 Years in Softball

WHEN
February 24, 2006

WHERE
Ultima Function Centre
Cnr Keilor Park Drive & Ely
Court Keilor Vic 3036



RSVP

ASAP

Contact
Diane Waller

0409 188605

Venue ONLY 10 Minutes from Tullamarine

Invitation

As we all know, John Larter has retired from Softball after being involved for the past 25 years.

On behalf of the Victorian Umpiring Committee, I am organizing a semi-formal evening for John.

This event is to be held on Friday, February 24, 2006.

The venue is: Ultima Function Centre
Cnr Keilor Park Drive & Ely Court Keilor
Victoria 3036

The cost will be approx. \$35 per head with drinks available from the bar. At this stage I am looking for numbers who wish to attend. This night should be a great night.

After I find out the numbers I will, of course, be in contact with you. Please RSVP your availability or unavailability to me in the next few weeks. If you think that there is someone else out there that would be interested, then please let me know.

Looking forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions, you can email me or ring me on 0409 188 605 or dianewal@bigpond.com.au

Kind regards, Diane

MR JOHN LARTER (Australian Umpire)

Commenced involvement in softball at Sunshine in 1981

- **Umpiring**

Became involved in umpiring in 1981 at Sunshine
1982 – Achieved Level 1
1989 – Level 2
1990 – Level 3
1991 – Level 4
1993 – Level 5

- **State**

Umpired at all State Championships 1989 - 1998
State Umpire Examiner from 1990 - present
Umpired and TCU State League
“ Blue Diamond Classic

- **National**

National Fastpitch - 1989-1997 - Umpire
1992 U19 & U16 Boys – Melbourne
1992 U19 Girls – Brisbane
1993 U19 Girls – Melbourne
1994 U16 Girls – Adelaide

- **Administration**

- **Local level**

Vice President – Keilor Park 1991 - 1993
President – Keilor Park 1984 - 1990

- **State Level**

Victorian Director of Umpiring 1994 - 2000
Victorian Umpiring Committee – Allocations Committee 1990 - 1994
Softball Representative & Secretary – Committee of Mgt, Stabsoc – 1993 - 2000
Victorian Umpiring Committee - Member and Treasurer – present position

- **National**

National Fastpitch Softball League Umpire Co-ordinator – 1997 - 1999
National Umpire Staff - Softball Australia - 1999 - 2005
TCU and/or Examining Panel – Australian Championships – 2000 - 2005

- **International**

TCU [Fastpitch] – World Police & Fire Games – 1992, Melbourne

Chairman – World Masters Games, Softball Competition – 2002, Melbourne
[This commitment was for more than 18 months and involved around 156 teams in the competition];

Member – Softball Victoria's Commonwealth Championship Organising Committee – 2005.