

Blue's News On-Line

Official Australian Softball Umpire's Magazine

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APOLOGY

To all BNOL readers who have been awaiting this edition.

Technical hitches have delayed this magazine.

Happy reading!!!



Margo Koskelainen and Vivienne Triplett

These two ladies were umpires at the highest level before most of us started our careers. They set a precedence in the early days and have been influential in many a career of umpires past and present.

Vivienne (above) and Margo (below) BNOL thanks you for the path you paved for so many. Cheers!



Matt Gowty - ASF Hall of Fame Electee

Matt has been retired from international competition for four years. Helping out with IT and special projects from time to time, Matt is a mentor and inspiration to many in the softball circles.



Matt's involvement in softball includes club, national and International level.

In 2004, Matt umpired his last game in the 2004 Australian Women's Championship, in what was an outstanding career spanning 28 years and four States.

Matt started umpiring in 1975, aged 12, at Jells Park and later attained his Waverley Badge in 1978. He continued to umpire until he joined the Air Force in 1981, which saw him transferred to Perth in 1983.

In 1984, Matt progressed to a Grade 3 Umpires Badge, followed by a Western Australian State Badge in 1985, Level 5 at the Australian Under 16 Girls held in Knox Victoria in 1986 and a Level 6 at the Australian Open Women's in Darwin in 1987.

Matt had his first experience in administration by taking on the role of Deputy Director of Umpiring in 1986. In late 1987, Matt was again transferred, this time to Townsville in North Queensland where he took on the role of Umpiring Coordinator.

It was during 1988 that Matt umpired his first international game, between Australia and Chinese Taipei, at the Bicentennial Challenge in Brisbane. 1989 saw Matt move to Brisbane where he joined the State Umpiring Committee and established the 'Counter Points' newsletter which is still being produced.

In 1990, he took part in the first "Elite Umpire Clinic" and umpire tour of USA and Canada and in 1993 he went on his first overseas tour to Christchurch in New Zealand. In 1995 joined National Umpiring Staff where Matt established Softball Australia's first National umpiring website.

Matt attended the ISF Junior Men's World Championships St Johns, Newfoundland, Canada in 1997 and achieved ISF accreditation and was the Inaugural winner of NSW SUSA "Andrew Rindfleish" Umpire of the Year Award.

In 1998, Matt was awarded Level 7 and in 2000 attended the ISF Men's World Championship in South Africa, receiving the Australian Sports Medal.

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In 2001 he attended the Junior Men's World Championship in Sydney, where he also plated the preliminary final. In this year he also participated in a committee to compile an ISF umpire manual.

In 2002 he attended the Women's World Championship in Canada and he was also awarded Australian Level 8. He also attended the 2002 Australian Sport Awards as a Finalist. Matt was selected for three consecutive World Championships, being the first Australian to umpire both a men's and women's world championship.

Australian Championships

Open Women 87, 88, 90, 93, 94, 99, 00, 04

U/19 Girls 87, 88, 89, 90, 99

U/16 Girls 86, 94, 96, 98, 01

Open Men 86, 88, 90, 91, 95, 97, 98, 00, 01, 02

U/19 Boys 91, 95*, 97*

U/16 Boys 95*, 97*, 03

* Combined Championships

Major International Tournaments

1988 Bicentennial Challenge Brisbane

1994 South Pacific Classic Sydney

1996 4 Nation Challenge Brisbane

1997 4 Nation Challenge Brisbane

1997 V Junior Men's World Championships St Johns, NFLD, Canada

1999 US Olympic Cup San Diego, CA, USA

2000 5 Nation Challenge Sydney

2000 X Men's World Championships East London, South Africa

2001 VI Junior Men's World Championship Sydney

2002 US Cup Honolulu, HI

2002 Canada Cup Vancouver, BC

2002 X Women's World Championship Saskatoon, SK, Canada

Awards

1997 ISF Accreditation

1997 NSWSA Official of the Year

1997 NSW SUA "Andrew Rindfleish" Umpire of the Year

2000 Officiating Victoria Softball Official of the Year

2000 Australian Sports Medal

2002 "VKT" Softball Australia Umpire of the Year

2002 Finalist of Australian Sport Awards Official of the Year.

In what is an illustrious career Matt Gowty is a model to the game of softball and has influenced many in his years of involvement. Blues News On-Line salutes a true ambassador of the National Umpiring Program. Well done Matt.

Letter to the Editor

I was reading the August edition of Blues news and I saw that you were looking for a list of long term umpires.

My father has been umpiring in W.A since 1980 when he started umpiring in Mundaring with Hills Softball association.

He then moved to Forrestfield with Hills Districts softball assn.He umpired at Forrestfield until 1994 when he was awarded a life membership to the association. During his time with Hills Districts he also umpired at the State league level with the Western Australian Softball Association.

He also umpired the national masters held in Perth. In 1994 he moved to the Pilbara and commenced umpiring with the Paraburdoo Men's and women's softball associations where he still umpires today, During his time in the North West of W.A he has umpired at Both the men's and women's North West Championships.

He was awarded life membership to the North West umpires association in 2004 and to the Paraburdoo ladies association in 2005.Considering he has never played a game of Softball in his Life (He's a baseballer) it is not a bad effort. His name is Grant Morton and he lives in Paraburdoo Western Australia.

Kenny Morton

Tasmanian Softball Championships

U14 Girls, U16 Boys, U19 Women

November 18 and 19 2006 in Ulverstone

U16 Girls, U19 Men

December 9 and 10 2006 in Hobart

U14 Boys B Grade

January 27 and 28 2007 in Hobart

Open Men and Women

February 18 2007 in Launceston

A few thoughts on umpiring by Anon

In the Spring/Summer of 2000/01 I umpired my first ever Softball game. My history of Softball at this stage was to coach a team for a total of two games. As with most people who umpire their first ever Softball game the pre-game training you receive is that you are told that your team that you coach has umpiring duties, here is a catcher's mask, chest plate and a clicker.

When you are coaching a modball team it is wise that a coach or a parent umpires the game. Little did I know that when I umpired this game both teams contained representative players and coaches, in this same game the pitchers and catchers of both teams went on to represent NSW at U'16 and U'19 levels at National Championships.

Do you think I was a little of my depth in this game? The answer is yes. I made such a success of umpiring this game I was not allowed to umpire a game again for the rest of the season.

However this did not deter me from trying to umpire another game, some may call me a masochist or a person without a life, I preserved to umpire another game. By receiving constructive feedback from the players and coaches of this game, I then had the confidence to umpire another game in the spring/summer of 2002/03. By 2002/03 I had seen a few more games and worked out what was needed to be done (I thought).

By this stage I was umpiring games were the players knew more about the game than me, so I let them just play the game and I would call the occasional ball and strike. My training as an umpire by this stage still consisted of here is a catchers mask, chest plate and clicker.

In the Spring/Summer 2004/05 my Association decided that they needed to train umpires if the game was to advance. We were lucky enough to have two

Level 5 umpires in our Association who were tired of umpiring every weekend at club, divisional and state level.

Yes I must be a person without a life as I thought if I got to know the rules of Softball, I might be able to be a more effective coach and might be able to umpire effectively when called upon.

Once the 2004/05 season was completed I become a Level 1 umpire. By becoming a Level 1 for some this does not change anything, however for me it become a life changing experience.

Since becoming a Level 1 umpire some of the best experiences I have had have come through the umpiring fraternity.

At the middle of the 2006/07 my experiences have been that I have umpired in two Waratah League seasons, ran bases in a couple of State League games, was a spectator at the Australian All Schools Softball Championships, as a spectator I was involved in umpiring 11 games in all.

In 2006 I have umpired in all age based State Championships from T-ball to U16's, Friendship series and improved international relations between a touring USA team and a local representative team.

I have also umpired for five associations in NSW at various carnivals and Masters competitions. However the highlight was when I was awarded the Ladies Divisional 1 plate in the grand final in the 2005/06 season, it showed that if you are willing to work on you game you can achieve anything.

At the time of writing this I am still a Level 1 umpire what happens when I advance to a Level 2 umpire.

SOFTBALL IN NSW

The umpires have had another couple of busy months in NSW. We have had the conclusion of the Women's Waratah and State League, Men's Waratah League, Open Women's State Championship & Modball State Tournament.

The Women's Waratah League Finals was held at Blacktown Olympic Park on Saturday September 23. Congratulations to Greg Zucchetti (Plate), Vicki Lansley (1st Base) & Kyira Cox (3rd Base) for a great job on the final.

The Men's Waratah League Finals and Women's State League Finals was held together at Blacktown over the long weekend of September 30 to October 2.

Women's State League Final was officiated by Andrew Rindfleish (Plate), Matt Hayes (1st Base) and Sharyn Girdler (3rd Base), while the Men's Waratah Final was controlled by Scott Rindfleish (Plate), Greg Zucchetti (1st Base) and Vicki Lansley (3rd Base).

Open Women's State Championship was held at Blacktown on October 7 and 8. Sue Itzstein (Plate), Scott Rindfleish (1st Base), Greg Baker (2nd Base) and Ron Houison (3rd Base) officiated in a four umpire system.

In conjunction with the Open Women's State Championship the Open Women's State Cup was held. The State Cup final was umpired by Ross Harrison (Plate), Greg Zucchetti (1st Base), Leanne Gearside (3rd Base), Geoff Fox (Left Field), George Norrish (Right Field).

At the conclusion of the Open Women's State Championship the umpires that have been appointed to National Championships were recognised and presented with their 2007 NSW State Representative Cap. Congratulations to all the umpires that will be representing NSW at the up and coming nationals.

It was time for the Juniors to hit the park at the U12 Modball State Tournament at Campbelltown on October 4 and 5. The Modball tournament is a time where the junior umpire's are able to learn valuable information from senior umpires from other associations.

Congratulations to Sharyn Girdler (Plate), Chris Loannou (1st Base), Sue Alison (3rd Base) & Rebecca Palmer (changes) on the boys final and Paul Bourke (Plate), Peter Medbury (1st Base) Virginia Mackie (3rd Base) and Dinga Bell (changes) on the girls final.

Job well done by all umpires that have participated in the Waratah Men & Women's, Women's State League, Open Women's State Championship, Open Women's State Cup & Modball Tournament.

Female Focus Group

I was asked by Ken Culpitt to examine the need for a "female focus group" to be developed within Australian Softball umpiring to examine specifically issues affecting female participation in umpiring.

This request was made in early August just prior to my departure for the World Series in Beijing with a report due for examination at the SDU meeting on 23-24 September.

This short time frame has meant my examination of the need for such a group has been limited in scope to some degree. I had to draw on my experience as a Victorian and Australian umpire and discussions with Margo Koskelainen, Diane Waller and a small number of other female umpires to reach my conclusions. Therefore, the examination of the need for such a group was by no means wide ranging but I believe my conclusions are nonetheless valid.

Conclusions

My investigations lead me to the conclusion that there is not a specific need for a "female focus group" to address issues affecting female participation in umpiring. I don't believe the issues affecting female participation are significantly different enough to those affecting male participation to warrant separate treatment. I believe it is more important that we look at the issues affecting participation by both males and females.

Can anyone truthfully say "ever since I can remember I have always wanted to be an umpire", highly unlikely. The truth is umpiring is usually something individuals "fall into" or are "coerced into". This means that recruiting and keeping umpires is not easy and requires a concerted and coordinated effort to succeed.

I believe a national plan for the recruitment and retention of umpires at all levels needs to be developed and implemented with the states. It is not necessary to "reinvent the wheel" to do this but perhaps draw on plans developed in other sports such as the AFL, Cricket and Netball. These other codes must have developed plans that could be modified for our needs.

This plan could include such things as

- mentoring at all levels of umpiring
- exposure to higher levels of umpiring for junior umpires to remove the fear of progression
- school visits by high level umpires to promote umpiring as an alternate means of involvement in sport
- constant promotion of the positive benefits of being an umpire

And the winners are... By DiAnne Liburn

The fifth annual Softball Australia Awards of Excellence dinner took place in Melbourne tonight, which saw softball greats and special guests from around the country gathered to acknowledge the best Australia has to offer in the sport.

Stacey Porter (Glenwood, NSW) won the Australian Female Softballer of the Year (sponsored by The Dugout) for the second consecutive year for her outstanding season both domestically and internationally.

In 2005/2006 Porter represented Australia at the Canada Cup, US World Cup, Japan International Series and the Chinese Taipei International Series and finished the year off by being selected in the Australian Open Women's team for the 2006 World Championship.

The Australian Male Softballer of the Year (sponsored by Easton) went to Andrew Kirkpatrick (Monash, ACT) who was part of the victorious ACT Open Men's team, dominating at the championship and winning both the Most Valuable Player and Best Pitcher Awards.

Kirkpatrick was selected as a pitcher in the Australian Open Men's team for the Commonwealth Men's Championship which was held in Melbourne and the Pacific Series in Japan. The Australian team reached the final of the Commonwealth Championship and finished third in Japan.

South Australian youngster, Alex Besanko (Walkerville) won the Young Australian Female Softballer of the Year (Boronia Travel Centre). Besanko was captain of the South Australian Under 19 Women's team that won the Elinor McKenzie Shield, South Australia's first national title in 22 years and led the statistics for her team and was named her State's Most Valuable Player.

Adam Folkard (Evatt, ACT) secured his fourth Young Australian Male Softballer of the Year (sponsored by Sportscover) award. This year Folkard stepped up from the Australian Under 19 Men's team to the senior team, pitching at the Commonwealth Championship in Melbourne and the Pacific Series in Japan.

At domestic level, Folkard represented ACT at the Australian Under 23 and Open Men's Fastpitch Championship, both teams claiming national titles, where he won the Best Pitcher Award (Under 23's) and hit seven home runs (Open's).

The Australian Softball Spirit Award (sponsored by the Australian Sports Commission) went to Paul Maisey (Point Cook, Vic) who recently announced his retirement from the international circuit, after 11 years of international softball and 136 caps. Maisey is a good ambassador for the sport and always accepted the opportunity to appear and conduct clinics.

He has volunteered as a founding member of the Softball Australia Athlete's Commission where he provides valuable input to the Board about the views and concerns of the athletes.

Lindsey Carroll (ACT) was named Australian Softball Coach of the Year (sponsored by the University of Queensland – School of Human Movement Studies) for the third time (2002 and 2005). Carroll coached the ACT Open Men's team and his efforts to lead a young team, which included 11 players under the age of 23, to the title was testament to his coaching ability.

Carroll was appointed as the Assistant Coach of the Australian Women's team, which saw him in a coaching role for the international series against Chinese Taipei and was also appointed for the Canada Cup, US World Cup and 2006 World Championship.

Jane Hunt (Modbury North, SA) has contributed a great amount of time and energy undertaking various roles on a voluntary basis which has led to her receiving the Australian Softball Administrator of the Year (sponsored by Sport Employment Australia).

A level 2 scorer, Hunt was the Statistician for the South Australian Under 16 Girls team in 2005 and 2006 and was also the Statistician for the South Australian Under 19 Women's Development team.

Kaye Greggs (Penrith, NSW) and Val Cross (Mackay, Qld) were joint winners of the Australian Softball Statistician of the Year (sponsored by Bellevue IT).

Greggs was the Chief Statistician at all events hosted at the NSW Softball Centre over the past twelve months and dedicates an enormous amount of time as Chief Statistician.

Cross has been actively involved in scoring at club, district association, state and national championships for over five years and readily makes herself available to help new and experienced scorers including travelling to regional parts of Queensland to assist in their development.

The Vivienne Triplett Award, Australian Softball Umpire of the Year (sponsored by McKenna Hampton Insurance) went to Darren Sibraa (Toowong, Qld) who has umpired softball for nine years and, in that short timeframe, has achieved a level six national accreditation.

The Casey Softball Association won the Australian Local Softball Association of the Year (sponsored by St George Bank). The Casey Softball Association, formerly known as Berwick City/Berwick Casey, has been in operation since 1973. After moving from its original location in Doveton to Sweeney Reserve in Narre Warren in Melbourne's south-east, the association has grown to be one of the biggest in Victoria, with over 600 members.

Alan McAuliffe (SA) was inducted into Softball Australia's Hall of Fame and Bill Gobbart (Vic) was presented with a Life Membership.

The awards are designed to honour exemplary achievement in categories such as coaching, officiating, athletic performance (male and female), spirit and administration over the past twelve months.

Sunshine State gears up for busy schedule

From September to November is arguably the busiest time of the year for Queensland based umpires. During this period there are 6 six state titles, numerous Master's tournaments, the 2006/2007 National Softball League Round 1 and the commencement of fixtures for the majority of associations throughout the state that play during the summer months.

Queensland Cup and Open Women's State Championships

Ipswich hosted this year's Queensland Cup and Open Women's State Championships October 8—10. The first two days of the tournament were conducted in perfect conditions, but come the last day, the skies opened up which resulted in the majority of the day including the Grand Finals being washed out.

During the tournament the following umpires were successful in achieving their next levels:-

Boyd Davison (Brisbane), Raymond Warwick (Ipswich) Level 4
Sean Laurance (Logan City) Level 2.

While the Grand Final was washed out the following umpires were rewarded for their umpiring during the tournament by being appointed to grand final crews:-

Queensland Cup – Yvonne Kahler, Ron Trow, Ian Frame
Open Women - David Casey, Stephen Gutteridge, Paul Gierke
President's Cup - Ian Goodman, Jamie Harries, Ken McIntyre.

Under 16 State Championships

The U/16 Boy's and Girl's State Championships were held from September 23 - 25 at Bundaberg and Redlands respectively. A report regarding these tournaments will be contributed for in the next edition of "Blues News On Line."

Umpires needed for World Games

Games coordinator for Softball, Alan McAuliffe is still in need of umpires for the World Police & Fire Games. If you be interested contact BNOL.

The World Police and Fire Gams will be held in Adelaide and will be in the Slow Pitch format.

Alan has promised a crash course on slow pitch rules and positions prior to the tournament. For further information contact BNOL and interested umpires will be passed on to Alan.



Women's World Championship Photo: Left to right, Michael Hannelly (Chief Statistician), Merle Butler (UIC), Harvey Stevenson (Canadian Team Leader), Margo Koskelainen (Deputy UIC)

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Umpiring builds skills for a lifetime. The qualities that make a great umpire are also the qualities that make a person a good employee, student, spouse, parent or friend. Teamwork, loyalty, sacrifice, studies, decision making, fair mindedness, accountability and honesty are just a few of the skills that can be learned, developed and implemented through umpiring.

I know we may be doing some of this already but I believe we need to develop a formalised plan and then a person be appointed to specifically oversee its implementation.

It is also important that we continually promote to the rest of the Softball community the need and value for high quality umpires to the continued development and expansion of the game. Coupled with this is the need for adequate funding and support to achieve this.

Debbie Grove



X1 Women's World Fast Pitch Championships – Beijing, China

Umpiring Crew

Merle Butler (UIC), Margo Koskelainen (DUIC), Liu Juan, Li Zhe, Jia Leiming, Jia Ali (China), Nicola Ogier (New Zealand), Duncan MacLean (Great Britain), Jill Tuckey, Greg Pipher (Canada), Gianluca Magnani (Italy), Lori Bish, Traci Stoelting (USA), Vince Maoeng (South Africa), Yang Hung-Yueh (Chinese Taipei), Kenzo Kato, Haruhi Goto (Japan), Virginia Bats (France), Pedro Jimenez (Venezuela) & of course Debbie Grove & Diane Waller (Australia).

Teams

Pool A

USA
Canada
Italy
New Zealand
South Africa
DPR Korea
Great Britain
China

Pool B

Australia
Japan
Chinese Taipei
Greece
Venezuela
Netherlands
Botswana
Colombia

Unfortunately the Colombia team didn't make the Championships. Apparently they had trouble getting their visas.

We met up with the Australian team in Brisbane and we then all flew to Beijing. We arrived close to midnight and were met by some volunteers. We were taken separately to our accommodation, which happened to be 100m from where all of the teams were staying.

The trip took one hour and it was as if it was peak hour traffic at midnight. We found out the bus that the Aussie team traveled in was involved in a small accident, which delayed their arrival. We stayed at the Suyuan Jinjiang Hotel that is a 3 star accommodation. We had breakfast every morning and dinner every night at the Hotel. Unfortunately there were no laundry facilities unless you paid for them.

We got up early to make the most of our first day. We got some directions as to where we should go and a volunteer gave us a map, which was all-Chinese to us. We traveled by foot, by taxis, by bus and even by pushbike cart visiting some interesting cultural sites. An english speaking Chinese couple came up to us when we took out our map, they were very helpful. When we arrived home the rest of the umpires greeted us. The Technical Officials had all been invited out for famous roast Peking duck dinner – interesting.

Pre-Tournament Meeting

The Technical meeting was held in the Hotel where the teams were staying. This meeting lasted 2 ½ hours, followed by lunch and then we had our Umpire's meeting.

Don Porter, ISF President and Andrew Loechner, Secretary General of ISF attended the start of our meeting. Don welcomed us and gave us his best wishes for the Championship. Over the next few hours we went through the following things –

20-second clock. (20 – 18 Offence can call "time", 17 – 13 Offence can't call "time", 12 – 6 Defence can call "time", 5 – 0 Defence can't call "time". If the batter is not in the batter's box within the first 8 seconds or the batter steps out of the batter's box with a called ball or strike – a "strike" will be called. If the clock counts down to 00 and the pitcher has not released the ball – it will be a "ball" on the batter.

Checking of the bats. Must be checked to the ISF certified bat list.

No jewelry is to be worn at all.

Plate umpire may wear two ball bags.



Sunglasses must be taken off when speaking to a coach.
 Mercy Rule – 20, 15 & 7.
 No delay in-between calling and signaling “strike”.
 ISF cap to be worn on the plate.
 Line-up cards – Ask the coach if only using 9 players.
 Changes to be made to either Merle or Margo via a walkie-talkie.
 Normal positions in-between innings.
 Rosin bag on hand, then hand on ball is OK, as long as no rosin directly onto the ball.
 2 second pause.
 The 4 man umpiring system.
 Intentional Walk – Dead Ball.
 Dehydration.

We went to the Stadium for an inspection. The grounds crew was doing their final preparations before the first game the following day. There was a separate umpire’s change room for males and females. Us females chose field 2 because it had a shower in it. (drip, drip, drip). Everything looked under control so we headed back home. We were invited out for dinner again; this time it was formal attire.

Some umpires had to wear their best formal polo shirts and tracksuit pants. A total of 16 buses headed off in a convoy with a police escort. The traffic was completely blocked off so that we had a clear run. Plenty of speeches in Chinese and then in English and once again the food was interesting. After dinner back at the accommodation, we had to meet again to finish off what we started early that afternoon. We all exchanged gifts and then we all received umpiring equipment from Mizuno. These included – pants, shirts, belt, ISF caps, socks and shoes.

Over the next ten days we spent at the Stadium and following are different things that happened: -

- The Opening Ceremony was very colourful and the stands were full, it brought a tear to the eye.
- The first game was delayed because the Organizing Committee wanted to leave about eight freestanding speakers on the ground. We ended up calling Merle onto the ground. The game started when all the speakers were removed.
- Every game on Diamond 1 was televised, with large crowds literally marched in to watch China play. The sound effects were enormous. The rent-a-crowd were colour co-ordinate with their caps and were only allowed to stay for an allocated amount of time. Even if the game was in a crucial stage – the crowd just up and left. At the start of the Championship the crowd were cheering at inappropriate times, like when the

batter hit a “foul ball”, but they were educated as the days went by. The “wave” was going around the ground, which looked impressive but the game had resumed.



- One of the TV cameras broadcasting through the wire netting was positioned directly behind home plate. This caused a few problems during the Championship due to the holes cut in the wire. A sheet of plastic was used to cover the hole until a ball hit it and broke the plastic, which was drilled and held into place with wire ties. So they tried a thicker sheet of plastic, but that was broken as well, so of course they had a brain wave and replaced the plastic with glass. Guess what!! the first ball that hit the glass just shattered it.
- Harvey Milson was in Beijing with the Aussies. He presented each of us with two pennies and told us the story behind it. They were our lucky pennies.
- Making changes – we tried different ways to do the changes: -
 - v Started off with giving the changes directly to Merle/Margo using a walkie-talkie.
 - v White boards were used by the teams writing down the “In’s & Outs” and then the subs and they would show them to Merle/Margo and the Statisticians.
 - v Plate Umpire didn’t have the Line-ups and we used a 5th umpire and they showed the board to Merle/Margo and the Statisticians, but the Plate umpire didn’t have the control that they needed to have.
 - v Then we had a runner help the 5th umpire to reduce time.
 - v The last couple of days the Plate umpire had the line-ups and the 5th umpire had a copy of the line-ups, so both of them recorded changes and then the board was used by a runner.
 - v Different systems were tried, but really none of these were perfected
- Checking of equipment – 1st game that the team played and then in the last 2 days using the ISF approved bat list. Suggestion that was mentioned was all the bats should be checked at the Technical meeting and a non-removable sticker be placed on the bat and only bats with the stickers on them could be used.
- After 3 warm-up pitchers most of the umpires were waiting until 2nd base received the ball before they broke from their position. Merle said

that it should be as the catcher releases the ball.

- Infield Fly signal – arm across chest to opposite shoulder indicating “0” or “1” out with either a clenched fist or a pointed finger.
- Short bunted ball close to home plate area that is thrown to 1st base – umpire to use “Fat man’s alley”.
- Brushing the pitcher’s plate after the 3rd out – the 3rd base umpire wanted to do this when the 2nd base umpire was practically runner past it.
- Protests – China coach protested on the 20 sec clock, that the time had expired for the pitcher but no “ball” was called and his batter was put out at 1st. (Even though there were no protests to be heard on the clock). A foul ball thrown from the catcher to 1st base player with no runners on and the pitcher was given an extra ball against her. (which is correct).
- Only three tiebreaker games.
- Shortest game – 1 hour.
- Foul Balls were retrieved from the spectators by the volunteers, except in the play-offs were they were allowed to souvenir them.
- Mike & Lis Hannelly were at the Championship working as statisticians. Mike was great because he took video and photos for us. He also took a number of photos of all the umpires and saved them onto a CD for each individual umpire. Thank you Mike and Lis.
- We had to check the state of the ball when it hit anything solid such as an upright pole. Some umpires were checking the ball when it hit the padded walls.
- Towards the end of the Championship the 2nd base umpire was responsible for watching the 20-second clock and if time had expired before the pitcher had released the ball, it was up to the 2nd base umpire to call “time” and let the Plate umpire know that there will be an extra ball on the batter. A lot of the catchers were holding on to the ball until the pitcher was ready to receive it after picking up the rosin bag and doing their gardening, etc. Maybe looking at making it a 25 second clock from the time the catcher has the ball.
- This was a test event for the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and there will need to be improvements, but they are working on them.
- You could not buy any food at the Stadium. We had all our food supplied, which was catered for by an Airline. The choice was Chinese food

or sandwiches. The sandwiches were exactly the same everyday for the whole of the Championship.

- There was no Championship T-Shirts being sold. They were more interested in selling “Beijing 2008” merchandise. You could buy a Championship cap, a key ring or a badge and that was it.

We did manage to get to the Famous Silk and Pearl Markets during our stay. As soon as you walk in the young ladies grab your arm and say “lady, lady, just one moment”. We did a lot of bartering at these markets; it’s unbelievable what you can pay.

The volunteers were mostly university students who could speak English. They were more than willing to do whatever you asked of them.

After most games we were debriefed. There wasn’t anything major throughout the Championship to have any team discussions over.

There were flags all around the grounds and surrounding areas. A couple of umpires who will remain nameless, tried to let’s say acquire some but the security guards gave them dirty looks. We then asked someone the next day if we could have some and they said “yes”. There were a few of us acquiring them when four security guards told Diane who was with Jan our volunteer to stop and stay here while they phoned someone. Diane thought that she would end up in prison or something. The others, seeing the four security guards just ran off. Everything was OK in the end.

After the Closing Ceremony, which we all were expecting to be huge, but wasn’t, we headed on back to the accommodation for our final meeting. Gifts were presented to Merle and Margo. We were all thanked and handed a Certificate and our allocation for the Championship. We are to receive an evaluation within two weeks.

On our final day we hitched up with the Aussies and went to the “Great Wall” of China. Lori Bish, an American umpire came with us. There were supposed to be some more umpires, but they decided not to go due to a controversial call that was made on the Australian game.

At the Airport we stood around for 1-½ hours while Jill Ritter was negotiating with the Airline staff regarding the weight. In the end they just put us all through. We are lucky that we didn’t have to pay because we were overweight on our way over to Beijing, so you can imagine how much we weighed going home – HEAVY. The plane was not full on the way home so most of us could spread out, which was great.

We missed our connecting flight back to Melbourne and the next scheduled flight was cancelled so we just had to hang around Sydney Airport for a few

hours. We were glad to get home.

Debbie's Game Allocations

Japan v Chinese Taipei
Greece v Botswana
Japan v Venezuela
China v DPR Korea
New Zealand v Italy
Canada v DPR Korea
China v South Africa
Netherlands v Greece
Great Britain v New Zealand
China v USA
USA v South Africa

Magnani – Ali – Bats - Grove
MacLean – Grove – Kato - Ogier
Juan – MacLean – Grove - Ali
Magnani – Kato – Grove - MacLean
Pipher – Grove – Waller – Kato
Grove – Juan – Hung-Yueh – Leiming
Grove – Jimenez – Stoelting – Pipher
Goto – Hung-Yueh – Magnani – Grove
Maoeng – Magnani – Zhe – Grove
Pipher – Grove – MacLean – Jimenez
Grove – Hung-Yueh – Leiming – Waller

Play Off (Pool B1st v Pool A2nd)

Japan v China

Waller – Stoelting – MacLean – Grove

Preliminary Final

USA vs Japan

Pipher – Magnani – Grove – Tuckey

Olympic Qualifying game (5th place)

Canada v Italy

Bish – Stoelting – Waller – Grove

Diane's Game Allocations

China v Great Britain
New Zealand v Canada
South Africa v New Zealand
Japan v Greece
New Zealand v Italy
USA v Great Britain
Italy v Canada
Great Britain v DPR Korea
Botswana v Chinese Taipei
Italy v Great Britain
USA v South Africa

Maoeng – Bish – Goto - Waller
Stoelting – Waller – Lieming - Juan
Hung-Yueh – Bish – Waller - Jimenez
Waller – Maoeng – Bish - Tuckey
Pipher – Grove – Waller – Kato
Ali – Waller – Juan - Bats
Waller – Bats – Ali - Bish
Hung-Yueh – Kato – Pipher - Waller
Waller – Tuckey – Kato - Bish
Ogier – Goto – Waller - Stoelting
Grove – Hung-Yueh – Leiming – Waller

Play Off (Pool B1st v Pool A2nd)

Japan v China

Waller – Stoelting – MacLean – Grove

Elimination Final

Italy v China

Stoelting – Walling – MacLean – Goto

PS Diane changed her name to Walling for today, well Merle did anyway.

Olympic Qualifying game (5th place)

Canada v Italy Bish – Stoelting – Waller – Grove

Summary

Debbie's games: - Plate – 3	1 st – 3	2 nd – 3	3 rd – 5
Diane's games: - Plate – 4	1 st – 3	2 nd – 4	3 rd - 3

Total of 14 games each.

We would just like to say that we had a very enjoyable experience. It was a great to meet more ISF umpires from around the world to add to the family. We believe that we have done the Australian Umpiring Program proud and we have let more people know that our program is a great one. We would like to thank Andrew Rindfleish for putting our names forward, also Softball Australia for their support. Thanks to Bernie at AIS, she kept us up to date with all the emails and the ISF for giving us a go.

Regards,

Debbie Grove & Diane Waller





2006 Grand Finals Umpire Crew - Winter Competition

Softball 2006 Men's Winter Competition Season comes to a Close.

It has been a tough year most would say for all involved in this years WASA Men's Winter Competition, not only for the declining number of umpires, but for the Competition Committee of which there are couple of new Office Bearers who probably felt a fair bit of pressure to continue the excellence of their predecessor(s).

2006 will be my final year as the UIC for the competition. After approximately four years at the helm, it is an opportunity to bring in and train somebody else into the position and teach them the finer points of being a Umpire in Chief (UIC).

It's not always easy, but it can be very rewarding. If you manage to do it right, there are many positives that come from it - **Respect** (not just by your peers, but from the general softball community at large); **Friendships** build and grow stronger through the **Team** system; **Co-ordination** is a top skill that you learn - a balance of games, people, positions and venues is never an easy task; and you learn to be a top **Communicator** between each of the groups.

As a leader, people look to you for guidance, strength and direction. It is a position that requires a certain amount of respect and organization as well as knowledge of your team and the game. I wish the next incumbent every success and hope that they too will experience the positives that I have had the privilege to enjoy over the years.

As mentioned, it has been a challenging year and I think *Murphy* was right in the thick of it! There were difficulties with teams, grading, venues, times and date changes. It would seem that somebody forgot the rusket biscuits to help with the teething.

However, despite all these hiccups, 2006 finished strongly and without any drama's, the teams who were successful in reaching the finals, played hard and in good spirit. Unlike in previous years, we ran the finals with a lot of two umpire systems, a sign of the depleting umpire numbers in the area. Another blessing was the weather - brilliant sunshine the whole time through!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few people for their support and dedication, who've been there the whole season.

Firstly, to the full-time umpires, Julie Richardson, Phil Harvey, Terry Scudds, Peter Richardson, Karen Woods and Roy Cox - you were the foundation of the crew and I thank you for being there and hope that you have enjoyed a very successful Season 2006.

To Colin Gibb, Bob Bond, John Mooy, Darren Alford who filled in full-part time throughout the season and to number of people who filled in on the odd occasion, thank you also for your support.

With respect to the Winter Competition Committee, thank you Steve Tupper (Chairman) and other committee and delegate members for your support throughout the season past and present. It has been a pleasure working with you all.

Finally, congratulations to all the teams who were not only successful in making the Grand finals for your respective grades, but to the teams that competed and won their division. Congratulations to Peter Richardson who plated the Men's Division 1 Grand final, and to the two line umpires, Julie Richardson and Philip Harvey.

THANK YOU ALL AND CONGRATULATIONS

Contributed by Betty Maas (AZUL UMPIRING ASSOCIATION W.A.)

On the Road to Beijing

After a quite relaxing flight to Beijing through Qantas, we arrived at Beijing Airport, where a help desk was at the exit, manned by the Blue Shirted Volunteers. It was so pleasing to just get off the plane and be whisked away to the hotel with a minimum of fuss.

Even at 11 o'clock at night, the traffic was busy and my memories of my last visit came back in relation to road rules. There are very few but surprising few accidents as well. On arrival at the hotel, right next door to the athlete's hotel, dinner was provided, washed down by ice cold water substitute. We didn't get a suite this time, but the room was still comfortable with a 7 foot wide king size bed.



Our first full day was acclimatising ourselves. A market was 10 minutes away and while I busied myself with cans of water substitute Lis found and purchased luxury items that the ordinary Australian cannot afford to buy. Let me tell you not all of the bananas made it back to the hotel. We also took the opportunity to book ourselves a tour of the great wall for the next day as we figured that we would not have much time to ourselves after that.

That evening's meal was Peking Duck in a restaurant around the corner. Again it is difficult to explain the difference between the local food and what we call Chinese in Australia. But let me tell you that for a huge meal of the duck, duck soup, duck sang choy bow, garlic prawns, water substitutes and some vegetables, the cost ran out to less than \$40.



The tour of the great wall also included the Ming Tombs, thousands of years of history just there. As is the custom we were taken to a Jade factory and shown how to pick the fake stuff. I know the more cynical may say how do we know their stuff is real but I will let that go. Of course needless to say Lis has some Jade Earrings to match the jade pendant she bought in Hong Kong. Then to the wall, the sec-

tions we are allowed to go to are just amazing. Of course there are other sections where the farmers have used their own form of recycling of materials.



The wall had 8 towers/sections where we went. Little known fact is that the wall in places is wide enough for 6 rows of troops to march side by side, and in some spots the walking surface goes up to 60% incline. We took the trolley to the 4th tower which was like going up a mountain in a theme park. As we have now found customary, the crowds were about 10 across. We got to the sixth tower, walked/climbed half way to the sev-

enth taking photos as we went, said bugger this and went back for a beer.

Of course the authentic tee shirts cost by far more here than in the markets, but Lis showed her shopping skills by getting the price knocked off not only the tee shirts, but the much sought after beer. We spent time feeding the black bears until the rest of the tour all got back from the souvenir stalls.

On returning late we found that we had been invited to a fairly swish do with the umpires, but we were too late getting back to go so there you go.

Our rest was over. The technical meeting went as most do and we were informed that the dress at the unannounced opening night's dinner was formal. It may not surprise you that they do not cater for people of my proportions in the local shopping centres, so eventually clothes were selected, haggled over, and paid for before going to the grounds for a meeting.

The venue was simply outstanding, having a few idiosyncrasies of its own, plus some placed on it. As the rooms were completely sealed we had to communicate with the umpires by walkie talkies.

That night at six thirty, the sixteen team and three officials buses set off to a function centre. Police escort all



the way, plus Police controlling every intersection made the trip fast and uneventful. A full banquet was supplied, together with wine, water and beer. Still keeping clear of the water I continued with the water substitute most of the night. After the speeches and dessert, every one got up and went to the buses for the police escort back to the hotel – although some of the teams were suggesting the congo line of buses go via the McDonald's drive through.



Then Day 1 of the competition. The opening ceremony was spectacular. The Australian sense of humour came out when the pigeons were released and we put our fans on our heads, that way it would hit the fan.

The scoring/scoreboard/announcers and results were all in one big room behind home plate. Fairly sophisticated computer equipment was available, the only thing we didn't have was internet access. (note: The National Scoring Committee members appreciated the break)



Another thing I have to stress is the strength Lis brought to the team. After reviewing the first game, I brought Lis down to join the team and she assisted in just about every aspect of the tournament. She was able to review score sheets, put the play by plays into an understandable form, and teach the volunteers who knew nothing about softball, terminology, as well as provide box scores information to the media once they requested it.

It was very pleasing to see the improvement of the scoring team over the tournament, as well as picking up on some of the finer points of scoring at international events.

Once again Lis was outstanding in this area as she had much more patience than me.

Mind you they also picked up from Lis the happy dance when they tried to prove to me that I was wrong on some earned runs. Luckily I found some errors they had made so we were all happy dancing and it lightened the moment.

By the end of the tournament the team of scorers were very good. One team did the final and had their extensions done at the same time I had. Their only difference was I had given an error to Japan, while they gave a hit to US. I think that is when it sunk in that we could differ, and that they were the official scorers and we wouldn't change their sheets.

Then it was over. In the tradition of Dawn Frazer Lis had attempted to obtain one of the many flags that adorned the venue. Lis did not have the reach to obtain the flags so during the closing ceremony I had to honour Dawn. After the closing ceremony Lis asked me if I had gotten her one flag to which I responded no. It was only then that I indicated that I had obtained 3 banners, plus some posters. They now have good homes.

With the end of the tournament we had a couple of days to wind down after the 14 hour days to do some shopping, more sight seeing and just relaxing. Foot massages in the hotel were great, but Lis and some Aussie supporters found a cheaper place. Foot massages were not all that was on the menu in that massage place!!!

Then home. Those of you who have met our child substitute will understand the reception we got when we got home. Our hands were sore from the tummy rubbing that was demanded, but that was still not enough. We were eventually forgiven, but Saffie did not leave our sides for three days.



The Winner: Darren receives the Umpire of the Year Award from Alan McAuliffe (Vivienne Triplett was unable to attend the ceremony) Softball Australia Vice President Phil Matthewson announced the winner.

Sibraa takes top award

Queensland State Director Darren Sibraa received the ultimate accolade in umpiring circles by being named the Vivienne Triplett Australian Umpire of the Year Award at the recent Awards of Excellence dinner.

With only a decade in the role of an umpire in the sport Darren has shown his worth on and off the playing field. Following his second Queensland umpire of the Year Awards in three years Darren's can rub shoulders with some of the best umpires who have won the prestigious National award.