

# MVUA NEWS

Official Newsletter of the Merrimack Valley Umpires Association (WWW.MVUA.ORG)

February 2010

By President Steve Collins

**M**y term as President of the MVUA is coming to an end. I have enjoyed the two years being the President of the MVUA, tremendously. I have memories that will stay with me forever, some good, some not so good. Other commitments require me to step aside and let someone else take the reins of this great organization. Like outgoing Presidents of the past, Ron Anand and Steve Martinelli I will continue to be involved and provide leadership and direction to the Board of Directors, when asked.



**O**ver the past two years as your President we implemented the evaluation program. Admittedly it still needs some tweaking, but it is working. Our membership is now approaching 250 members. We have grown by almost 100 members in the past few years. That is good news and bad news. We have more leagues and more umpires. I am concerned about the balance and supply/demand issues affecting both umpires, games, and leagues.

**We have grown by almost 100 members in the past few years. That is good news and bad news.**

Prior to being President I served on the Board of Directors as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and Interpreter. I served on the Board of Directors for over 10 years and felt my time was very rewarding.

Thank you for allowing me to serve,

Steve Collins

## Annual Meeting

## March 7th

Attendance  
is NOT optional

- ♦ Breakfast at 8a.m.
- ♦ Call to Order 9a.m.

Agenda on Page 3

**Wyndham Hotel  
Andover, Ma  
(Off Route 93)**



# MERRIMACK VALLEY UMPIRES ASSOCIATION

February 6, 2010

Dear MVUA Member,

**Official Announcement:** This is the official MVUA announcement that the Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, March 7, 2010 at the Wyndham Hotel, Andover, Ma.

***The MVUA by-laws state that you must attend the annual meeting.***

If you cannot attend you must notify the President.

**Annual Meeting - Agenda**

**Sunday, March 7, 2010**

**Wyndham Hotel, Andover, Mass**

08:00 Coffee, eggs, bagels toast, MVUA T-shirts will be available (Buffet Breakfast)

09:00 Call to Order – President Steve Collins, Introduction of all members present, attendance

- President's report – Steve Collins
  - Awards
- Secretary's report & Treasurer's report (financial condition) - Joel Saren
- 2nd Vice President's report (Membership, Retention, Recruiting) - John Silva, Jr
- 1st Vice President's report (Education and Training)– Ralph Wade
  - Clinic Dates
  - Interpreter's report - Ron Annand - Review of the Take Home test
  - Announcement of clinic dates
  - Nominations, elections
  - Voting during break
  - Clinic
  - Elections' results

## Old business

## New business

- Recognition of members.
- Consideration of proposed by-law amendments

## Adjourn

**PLEASE remember to bring this Newsletter to the Annual Meeting**

**YOU MUST CALL OR  
EMAIL THE PRESIDENT  
IF YOU ARE NOT GOING  
TO ATTEND THE  
ANNUAL MEETING  
(per our by-laws)**

**All by-law proposals have been certified as having been received by the Secretary/Treasurer by the required date of Jan. 20.**

## **Proposed Changes to MVUA By-Laws**

### **Part A Submitted by Joel Saren**

#### **Article V:**

Section 1: That the By-Laws Part B, be freestanding and henceforth be called the Policy and Procedures of the MVUA and will abide by the same rules for changes as the by-laws.

### **Part B. Submitted by Joel Saren**

#### **Section 11—DUES (CURRENT)**

A late fee of \$10.00 shall be levied for dues paid after September 30th.

(Proposed) A late fee of \$15.00 shall be levied for dues paid after September 30th.

**This proposal has been reviewed and is endorsed by the Board of Directors.**

**NEW—** Section 12. A member who has not paid his dues on time and requests and extension shall pay the dues amount plus all late fees.

**This proposal has been reviewed and is endorsed by the Board of Directors.**

#### **NEW—Article IV Section 6.**

All MVUA official communications to the membership will be sent by the President or the Secretary/Treasurer. Violations will be addressed by the Board of Directors.

**This proposal has been reviewed and are endorsed by the Board of Directors.**

#### **NEW (Part A, Article III, Section 4 (new))**

The Board of Directors shall be governed by Roberts Rules of Order. V 10

**This proposal has not been reviewed by the Board of Directors.**

### **Submitted By Ralph Wade**

### **Part B, Sec 8 Policy and Procedure**

#### **Section 8. Definition of levels/Evaluation Process (CURRENT)**

Level one (two years) upon passing the official MBUA test the candidate now becomes a level 1A. Level 1A must attend the Annual meeting and all the required clinics, as well as have one on field evaluation before being promoted to a level 1B. Level 1s may do games as long as they have attended the required mechanics clinics. After the second year as a level one and completing all requirements, with (2) on field evaluations. They will be recommended for promotion to the Board of Directors to level 2A

Level 2 (two years) A Level two umpire is one who has successfully completed two years as a Level One member. They will need two on field evaluations and approval from the BOD for promotion to level 3

Level 3- A Level three umpire is one who has successfully completed two years as a Level 2 umpire, and has been promoted by the BOD to Level 3.

One evaluation per year is required or TWO per Level before any member can be recommended for promotion.

## Section 8. Definitions of Levels/Evaluation Process (PROPOSED)

Apprentice—An Apprentice member is any member who has taken and passed the MBUA test, but who has not yet completed his/her mechanics training. Apprentice members are required to attend one (1) indoor and one (1) outdoor clinic and obtain one (1) on-field evaluation. Apprentice members are required to obtain 25 points, minimum, to be considered for promotion by the Board of Directors to Active Member level 1.

Level 1: After having completed the requirements of an Apprentice member and one year of continuous membership in the MVUA, Level 1 members are required to attend one (1) indoor and one (1) outdoor clinic, and obtain one (1) favorable on-field evaluation. Level 1 members are required to obtain 25 points, minimum, to be considered for promotion by the Board of Directors to Active Member level 2.

Level 2: After having completed the requirements of a Level 1 member and one additional year of continuous membership in the MVUA, Level 2 members are required to attend one (1) indoor and one (1) outdoor clinic and obtain one (1) favorable on-field evaluation. Level 2 members are required to obtain 20 points, minimum, to be considered for promotion by the Board of Directors to Active Member Level 3.

Level 3: Those members who have completed the requirements of an Active Member level 2. Level 3 members are required to obtain 10 points per year.

Promotions by the Board of Directors become effective at each year's Annual Meeting.

**This proposal has been reviewed and is endorsed by the Board of Directors.**

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**Submitted by Rande Chabot**

### **Article I Section 13 Test (CURRENT)**

An Annual take home test will be given to all members. The test will be reviewed by the Interpreter. Any member who does not obtain at least a 70% (seventy) score must be retested with a new or same test as determined by the Interpreter. The timeline for completion of a make up test will determined by the Interpreter.

Any appeal of the timeline will be decided by the Board of Directors.

**Change to read as.**

#### **Article I Section 13 Test**

**An annual take home test will be given to all members. The test will be reviewed by the Interpreter. Any member who does not obtain at least an 80% (eighty) score must take a new or same test as determined by the Interpreter. This test must be back to the Interpreter no late then Feb 24. Must pass with an 80%.**

Proposed Change to Article IV General  
Section 4 Dress Code

Mass High School Baseball -- Dress code shall be as Stipulated by the MBUA.

MVUA dress code: Hats - navy with MVUA logo or a plain Navy cap  
Pants -Pleated front, heather gray or dark charcoal gray; Shirt - Micro-mesh short sleeves with or without MVUA patch on left chest. colors Navy with red/white trim, - Light blue with red/white/navy or black/white trim, - Red with white/navy trim, - Black with white trim, - Cream with Black trim, - White with navy/red trim, - Gray with black trim.

Pullover Jacket- Navy shell with red/white navy trim over shoulder, - with or without MVUA patch.  
All Umpires doing a game together must wear the same colored shirts.

When doing games in New Hampshire regardless of the level of the game no MBUA hats or Patches shall be worn.  
**This proposal has not been reviewed by the Board of Directors.**

**By-Law Proposal: (John Goodwin)** (Article II, Meetings—Clinics Section 1—Meetings and Clinics

Add: to make

E) Mandatory of one (1) indoor clinic for learning to call strikes, balls, out, and safe, using proper mechanics and voice. One (1) outdoor clinic for learning proper positioning and mechanics for plays at all bases by both plate and base umpires covered in the two-umpire mechanics manual.

Art.III Umpiring Affiliated Leagues

Section 3

No member may umpire with a non-member in a scheduled affiliated league game unless an emergency arises and then the member may use his own discretion, keeping the good of the association in mind.

Change to read:

Any member accepting an assignment may work the game with a member of a different association.

Art. IV Dress Code

Section 4:

The dress code shall be the same as stipulated by the Mass. Baseball Umpires Association (MBUA) for High School games only.

Add:

A)..... Umpires shall have the opportunity to decide on which umpire hats and shirts to wear for non-high school affiliated games.

**By Law Proposal (Mark Barson, John Silva, John Goodwin)**

We as a group of veteran umpires are proposing the following by law change

Level 1 and Level 2 umpires make their mandatory yearly required points/clinics and make one mandatory evaluation per level.

If the requirements are not met then the umpire will be dropped from the membership.

*Currently we have a system in place that if the umpires do not meet their requirements then they will not progress to the next level.*

*We believe the current system allows an umpire to stay at a level for as long as they want, and then this same umpire will be umpiring games and representing the MVUA. We find this totally unacceptable.*

*Any superior organization has structure, and we believe by mandating this process we can achieve that. This past year approximately 94 umpires had an opportunity to be evaluated and only 16 umpires took advantage of it. This means that less than 10% of the umpires took the time to be evaluated.*

*We as a group (MVUA) have always said that our training far exceeds other organizations and that we want to produce the best product on the field. This is not what's happening. Yes this is an aggressive move, but it is a move that will serve to strengthen our membership. It will show that we are not only umpires, but we represent an organization that is committed to excellence.*

*We collectively believe that this new process is in everybody's best interest and trust you will vote for this necessary by law change at our annual meeting.*

**From the 1st Vice President  
(Education and Training)  
Ralph Wade**



Dear Members,

**In** response to many questions, I want to clarify a few things:

**Did you know that the MVUA is the only umpire association in  
the State of MASS that uses a level system?**

Moving up and progressing in the MVUA level system is totally voluntary. It is not mandated, nor should it be. We all have constraints on our time and situations come up that can make it impossible to attend scheduled clinics and make the points requirement. There is no penalty for that.

Our level system is an internal aid, only to track and document that an umpire has received a certain amount of training. You are not mandated to attend training sessions, get evaluated, etc., unless you feel the need for it. If you are happy at your current level, that's fine. If you feel you want more training, and improve on your skills, we are there for you. However, the assignors use their best judgment and select umpires they feel have the best ability. So, I encourage you all to get to the clinics if you can, get evaluated often to gauge your progress and improve. **There is no place to go but up!** This will certainly improve your skills as an umpire.

**Your level is irrelevant. Your ability is what counts. So, get all the training you can.**

**T**his past year we conducted 2 new umpire classes and welcomed many new members. In addition, thanks to the efforts of Mike Juralewicz and the Newburyport Umpire's Association, who took the MBUA test, we added even more new members to our numbers.

**The MVUA is a membership of inclusion, not exclusion.**

As our numbers grow please be aware that this can create competition to get the best trained umpires to officiate baseball games. In my opinion, the MVUA offers the best opportunities and availability for umpiring training clinics. We offer many clinics, plus an evaluation system, which many associations do not have. All members should take advantage of this. **It's your decision.** Whether you're a level 3 umpire or an Apprentice, it doesn't matter, you can always learn something at our clinics. So, I invite all members to be a part of our training process and make our membership the best it can be. If you have any suggestions as to how we can make our organization better, please let me know.

See you all at the annual meeting.

Ralph Wade  
1ST VP Merrimack Valley Baseball Umpires Association MA/NH  
603 382 0013 h  
978 476 2801 c  
[rwade2185@comcast.net](mailto:rwade2185@comcast.net)

I'm sure you have heard the instructors at MVUA Clinics preach the fact that you have got to move and get into position when you are doing a game and they always add the small but important phrase, "You don't know who is in the stands watching you"

That little sentence is so important to your success as an umpire. Every game you do, the coaches and players are watching you and there will be a time when someone will be there to specifically watch your performance as an umpire. It may be the assignor who gave you the game; it could be one of MVUA Evaluators. If you are doing high school games it could be Don Overka – I had that happen a number of times. Bottom line is, be consistent and do every game like it is the most important game in your umpire career. On the flip side of the coin, every game you do is important to every player on that field and in the dugout.

What's my point to all this? In July of 2009 I was finishing up my district and sectional games for Little League Junior and Senior Baseball (14, 15, 16 year olds). I was really looking forward to a break until Fall Ball began. On July 18<sup>th</sup> I received a letter from the State Director's Office informing me that I had been selected to do the State Finals on the weekend of July 25<sup>th</sup>.

I don't know who watched me or when, but it did happen at some point. Are my mechanics perfect – absolutely not but I try to improve every game and every year I try to improve my mechanics by working on one specific mechanic that year.

The Massachusetts State Finals were held at LaLacheur Park, home of the Lowell Spinners. There were twelve umpires selected from across Massachusetts and we divided into two crews of six. My crew had three umpires who had been involved in the Little League World Series and the Junior/ Senior National Championships a few years ago.

I was told to get to the park at least an hour and half early. Being a rookie, I got to the park about two hours before the games, wondering what could be so important that I have to get there so early - the PRE-GAME CONFERENCE. First we drew our field positions out of a hat and then the Crew Chief, the plate umpire, began the rules quiz and situation discussion/quiz and we all had to answer the questions and explain the situations. Then he went over what he expected from us as umpires in the six man system. I thought, man, what the heck did I get myself into now, but that was the best pre-game conference I had ever attended.

As we begin another baseball season, make time to attend the MVUA Clinics. Schedule an evaluation not only to meet the criteria to get promoted but to help yourself improve your game management and mechanics. Take advantage of the training that the MVUA offers. Learn all you can, it makes umpiring a lot more fun.

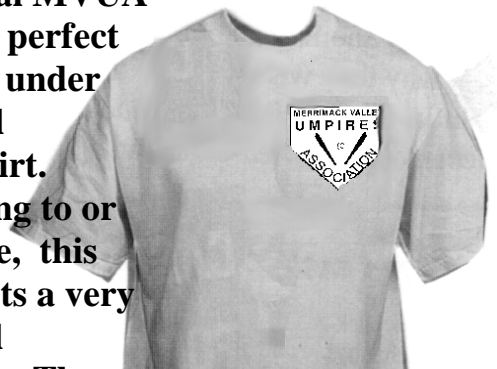
Have a great season!

**Joe Salvucci**



## Get your MVUA T-shirts Now

**These official MVUA T-shirts are perfect for wearing under your official umpire's shirt. When driving to or from a game, this shirt presents a very professional appearance. They are available in Lg. and up to XXXlg. They have the MVUA logo.**



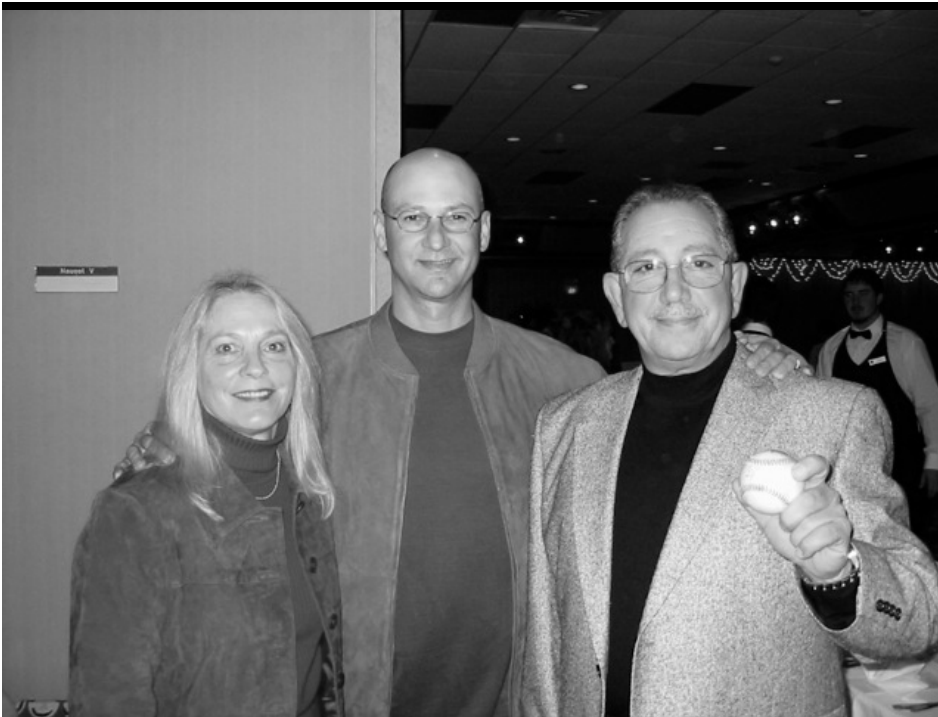
**Only \$10.00ea**

**For t-shirts availability contact Rande Chabot**

**LAST CALL FOR DATABASE CHANGES !**  
**There will be MVUA rosters distributed at the annual meeting. Please send any personal information changes to Joel@JSaren.com to get any of your updates in the latest roster reports.**

**Deadline is March 1.**

**(Remember we now can handle up to 3 email addresses per person. )**

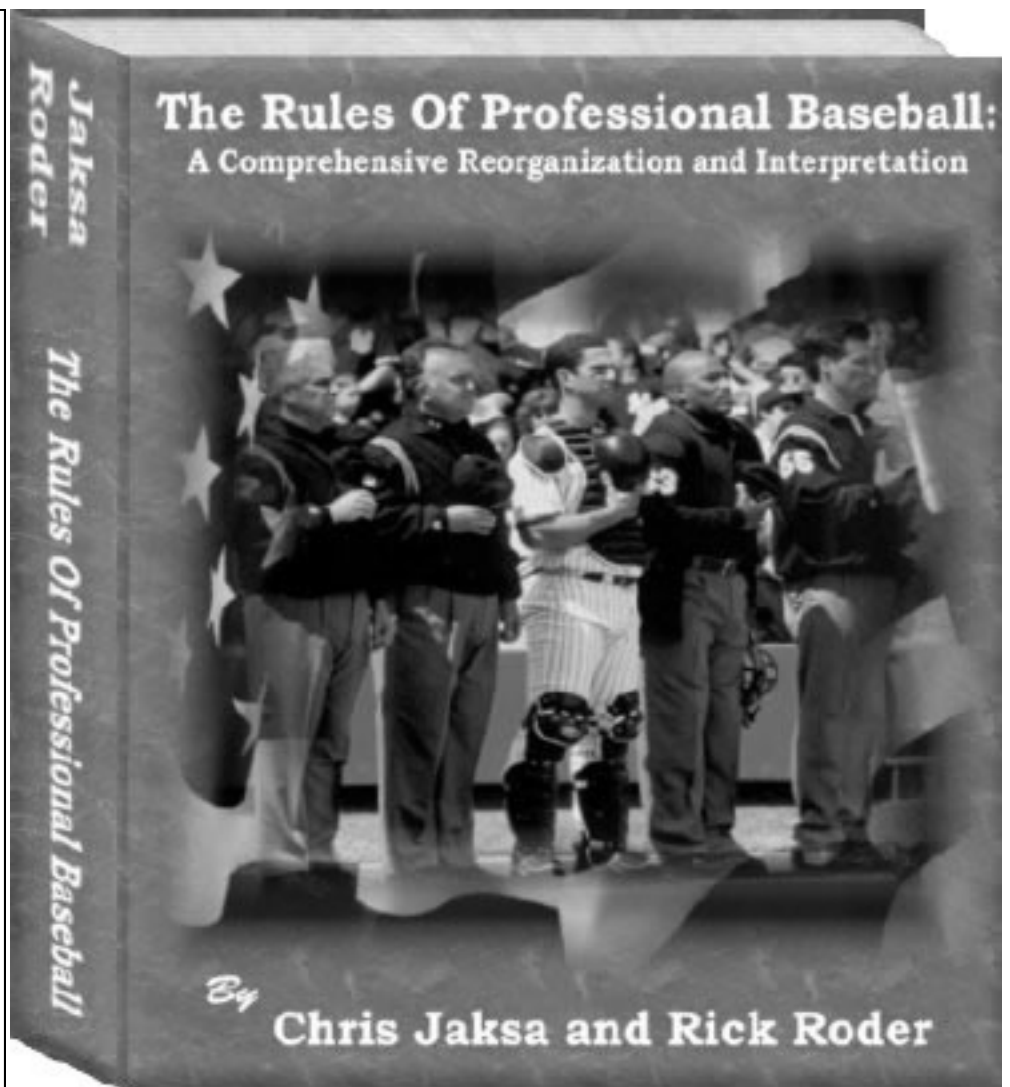


Doug Ricciardi (shown here along with Terry Francona and Doug's wife, Christine Ricciardi) will be one of the speakers at our annual meeting on March 7. Doug, Sean Healy, and Bill McCallum will talk about :

- ◆ Communications
- ◆ Frequently used hand signals – there are many used.
- ◆ What are they using at CBUA
- ◆ Force play slide rule
- ◆ Handling discussions with coaches
- ◆ Game Management

The Board of Directors has authorized the purchase of 80 of these books. “The Rules of Professional Baseball, A comprehensive Reorganization and Interpretation.”

They sell for \$40 each. (We did not pay \$40 each. We negotiated a better price for 80 books). They will be given away, process to be announced, at the annual meeting.



## Little League Clinic, by Jeff Buxton

The MBUA exam covers only OBR. However, most umpires start out working games in Little League, which has some important rule differences. To help you understand them MVUA offers a 2-hour Little League clinic worth 5 clinic points covering many topics such as:

- Special Little League rules, like leaving early and slide rules (a rule differences chart between OBR and Little League rules is provided)
- 2010 Little League Rules update
- Proper positioning in both the 2-man and 1-man system on the 60' diamond
- Special considerations in calling balls and strikes in youth baseball
- General advice to the new umpire on game management
- Question and Answer session (situations and rules)

The exact time and place will be published on the MVUA website shortly, but it is usually held on a Sunday evening in late April in North Andover.

### Small Diamond, Big Changes

It has been said that doing the bases on the small diamond is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most difficult job in umpiring. Umpire mechanics are very different than on the big diamond.

The fundamental difference is at the start of a play the base umpire is **always** outside the diamond. The mantra to remember is: "When the ball stays in, you stay out. When the ball goes out, you come in." That means when the ball is hit into the outfield, the base umpire needs to bust inside the diamond to cover plays on the bases.

For that reason, the plate umpire usually has all fly balls, except when you are in A. If you do choose to go out on a trouble fly ball, stay out. Communicate this to your partner, as he will now have all the runners. Also, make sure you and your partner know who has the lead runner and who has the trailing runners in all situations.

With no runners on, the A position is the same as the big diamond, but you should be a little closer to the 1b bag, 10 to 12 feet. When the ball is hit in the infield, you stay outside, but move to a 45-degree angle to make the call at 1b. But, if the ball is hit to the outfield, immediately bust into the infield at a 45-degree angle, pivot to watch the batter-runner's touch at 1b, and then move into the working area to take him around the bases. Make sure you cover who takes plays at 3b with your partner in the pregame.

With a runner at 2b only, you are in B, behind the second baseman, between him and 1b. Adjust your depth based on the depth of the infielders. Personally, I like to be on the dirt as long as I can keep the fielder at least 4 feet in front of me. Don't be too deep on the outfield grass.

If the runner steals you have 2 options, slide along outside, or move toward the baseline, let the runner pass, and then bust inside and pivot to make the call. The latter takes practice and anticipation. It is an advanced move, so don't try it unless you practice it first.

In all other situations, you are in C, behind the shortstop. With 2 out, the likely play on a ground ball is to 1b, so it is best to be between the SS and 2b bag. With less than 2 out, the likely play is to 3b, so play between the SS and the 3b bag. Again, if the ball is in the infield, you are on the outside, and yes, the call at 1b is yours. Move when the ball is hit to get the best angle you can. This can be a tough call sometimes, so be sure your partner is backing you up on a pulled foot or the batter missing the bag.

When the ball might be hit into the outfield, you should wait for it to pass the infielders, and then immediately bust hard into the working area between the pitcher's mound and the 2b bag for calls on the bases.

You will have to be aware of likely throws and stay out of the way. Sometimes this can be difficult to do, especially on balls hit between the infielders and outfielders. Sometimes you will get trapped outside, and you'll just have to do the best you can.

Also, on overthrows you should try to get inside if possible to make calls on the bases. Sometimes this isn't possible either and you have to adjust.

In any event, anticipation and movement is the key. However, because of the relative lack of skill of the players at this level, you can't over-anticipate. Especially at the lower levels you have to be prepared for anything: the players don't know what they are doing, and sometimes neither do the coaches. It's at these levels where you will see many "third-world" plays, plays you will never see in a high school game. Stay loose, stay sharp, and be ready for anything. Remember, they are just kids, keep it safe, and have some fun out there.

See, I told you it wasn't easy ! If you are still confused all will be explained and demonstrated in more detail at the Little League Clinic in April, so if you will be working 2-man games in Little League make sure you attend it.

## Umpire Ethics

### Who and what is the umpire? What is their role?

All modern baseball has its origins, at least in part, in the Constitution of the New York Knickerbocker Baseball Club and its 1845 rules drawn up by club member Alexander Joy Cartwright. At that time the umpire was a revered and respected participant in the "field exercise" of "base ball," with the power to fine members for breaches of their club charter and to collect the fines on behalf of the club before the participants decamped. His chief function was to make all decisions on the plays during "field exercise."

The umpire apparently remained revered through the 1870s when, with the advent of professionalism and the first professional rules codified in 1876, the external pressures on umpires had become all too evident. Clubs were then required to select an umpire from a list of "five persons, competent to act, who are *not members of the visiting club*." Umpires could "not be changed during the progress of a match game, except for reason of illness or injury, or by the consent of the captains of the two contesting nines, in case [they] shall have *willfully violated the rules of the game*."

But a mere ten years later the umpire had instead become a hated object of ridicule, as evidenced in the 1886 Chicago Tribune doggerel "Mother, may I slug the umpire?" Even A.G. Spalding saw no harm in attacking umpires, proclaiming it was "the fans' democratic right as Americans to oppose tyranny in any form."

Throughout history, umpires have struggled with the task of being impartial arbiters. Two early minor league officials even died in their effort. Others have courageously carried on, despite the pressures. One 19th Century official, Bob Emslie, lost all of his hair through stress but continued officiating in a wig. It is clear that, from the very beginnings, the umpire was by rule a very powerful arbiter, but also one subjected to extraordinary pressures in making decisions, even on the lowliest diamond.

When those decisions are anything but clear cut under the rules, forcing the arbiter to make an *on-field ruling*, the game has a history and tradition of vilifying the umpire for his trouble. As a consequence, only those who are truly mentally tough continue in the discipline for any length of time. That brings us to the question of what the fans, players, coaches, clubs, leagues and even other officials expect of umpires. I have compiled a few varied answers to that question.

## What does an umpire "look like"?

1. Umpires were required to be "gentlemen of good repute," according to the 1887 Code.
2. Umpires were also required to be "competent to act" as umpires. Presumably that precluded persons of "good repute" who were also blind, deaf, stupid, or worse.
3. From as early as 1883, the first contracted professional umpires were required to be "proficient in the discharge of their duties and ...[appear] in proper dress."
4. "By 1904," according to Evans' *Baseball Rules Annotated*, "the rules stipulated that the umpire was the *representative of the league* and as such was authorized and required to enforce each section of the code. Umpires had *fining authority* until 1950. Fines ranged from \$5 to \$100 for specified misconduct, and ejection was an alternative when the fine did not deter the violator."
5. Since 1956 the *Official Baseball Rules* in Rule 9.01(a) have required that the umpires "shall be responsible for the conduct of the game in accordance with these rules and for maintaining discipline and order on the playing field during the game."
6. According to Rule 9.04, the umpire-in-chief shall also have authority to "decide when a game shall be forfeited."

While that is by no means a comprehensive list, as any beginning umpire will readily know, it does provide pointers to most of the major expectations. An umpire must be:

- ◆ of good character;
- ◆ competent for the task;
- ◆ proficient;
- ◆ professionally attired;
- ◆ responsible to conduct the game in accordance with the rules;
- ◆ capable of maintaining discipline and order on the field; and
- ◆ capable of exercising ultimate authority over the game.

I believe that it is in the responsibilities outlined in Rule 9.01 (a) where we find some margin has been left for umpires to make ethical decisions that may *appear* to be in conflict with the strict letter of the rules. Umpires must often choose between following the strict wording of a rule, or its underlying spirit and intent, and maintaining discipline and order on the playing field. In the umpire's quest to properly represent the league interests, it is inevitable that such momentous and often conflicting choices must be faced.

[Carl W. Childress, *UmpiresTalk*, July 4, 2000]

## **WE ALL HAVE RULES WE LIVE BY, THESE SHOULD BE YOURS**

- ◆ ALWAYS be on Time
- ◆ ALWAYS have a pre-game conference
- ◆ Look sharp and dress the part
- ◆ Get out from behind the plate ( at home and on the field)
- ◆ ALWAYS put the ball back in play
- ◆ NEVER make a call on the run
- ◆ ALWAYS enter and leave together
- ◆ ALWAYS stay focused
- ◆ NEVER turn your head away when calling balls and strikes
- ◆ NEVER say “You’re out” when “out” is enough
- ◆ NEVER say “take your base” after ball 4. (they know where to go)
- ◆ NEVER put your hands in your pockets
- ◆ ALWAYS give and respond to signals
- ◆ Slow down your timing
- ◆ DON’T call “TIME” every time the defense asks for it
- ◆ DON’T be lazy, get into position for the call
- ◆ ALWAYS work the “slot”
- ◆ NEVER move your head
- ◆ ALWAYS remove your mask with your left hand
- ◆ NEVER take your eyes off the ball
- ◆ NEVER catch a baseball, have them throw it to the catcher
- ◆ ALWAYS hustle
- ◆ NEVER indicate pitch location
- ◆ NEVER wear a watch
- ◆ ALWAYS read your rulebook

(Reprint) Steve Collins loves the game of Baseball, that’s why he writes this stuff.

## **APPEARANCE DOES MATTER!**

In the world of politics there is an old adage: “Politics is Perception”. In the political world, it is often more important on how a candidate is perceived by the constituents rather than the actual job performance. In the world of sports officiating, while nothing can take the place of doing a good job, **an official’s appearance really does matter.**

The MVUA prides itself on developing high quality umpires for the leagues that we serve. The association requires mandatory attendance at training sessions and clinics for all members each year. The goal is to not just place umpires out on the fields, but to place quality umpires out there to do the games properly.

Your appearance as an umpire is an important aspect of the game. Taking the field in a clean uniform, polished shoes and hustling around the diamond are important to earning the respect of the players, coaches and fans. I have observed many games over the years where the umpires appeared to be going through the motions and were more interested in getting the game over with rather than working the game itself.

Many of the lower level games we work are comprised of one-man crews. In these games it is easy to fall into the trap of staying close to the plate even though all of the action is on the bases. While no one expects the umpire to be on top of each play, it is nice to see an umpire whom hustles out as far as he can and get the best possible angle on each play. This type of work ethic eliminates most of the complaints from the players, coaches and spectators.

Finally, the uniform. One of my pet peeves is when I see an umpire out there with white sox, a braided belt or work boots on. These items are against the dress code and give the umpire an unprofessional appearance. Good coaches quickly pick up on these little things when sizing up the umpires as they enter the field. Always start the game with shoes polished. Yes, we often are running between games and do not have a lot of time to clean and polish our shoes. However, even a quick coating of the liquid polish only takes about ten minutes to dry. Also, sweat stains on hats are a no no. A quick tip in this newsletter a few years back promoted the use of fabric freshener on hats after each game. It helps keep them clean and sharp.

We all enjoy the money we make from officiating games at different levels. While there is nothing wrong with this, lets all make the effort to look our best on and off of the field. It goes a long way to making the game experience the best for everyone. After all, appearance does matter!

Ken Dion (reprinted from 2003)