



The e-newsletter of the Amateur Baseball Umpires' Association

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Have you renewed your ABUA membership? Click [here](#) for a member registration form!



ABUA Membership Drive in High Gear

The ABUA's most ambitious membership drive – The Drive for 2005 – is in high gear as membership sailed by the 1,000 mark February 2. To date, membership stands at 1,270, 735 short of our goal of 2005 members in 2005.

For those of you who have not renewed your membership, click [here](#) for a registration form you can download and print. Also, online registration is available by clicking [here](#).

Please let your fellow umpires know about ABUA and the benefits of membership. And don't forget to mention the special membership promotion whereby if you sign up two new ABUA members you will receive your membership for \$20. The cost is \$100 for three memberships, a \$20 savings to you!!



Bruce Doane Sr. Umpire Camp a Huge Success

The 14th Annual Bruce Doane Sr. Umpire Camp in Grand Rapids, MI, was a big hit again as 77 umpires descended on Grand Rapids Community College for the February 4-6 camp.

Chief instructors included Rich Fetchiet, Ann Arbor, MI; Dick Runchey, Plymouth, MI; Mark Uyl, East Lansing, MI; and Kyle McNeely, Cincinnati. There also were 13 other instructors at the camp.

The camp, which was tailored for high-school and youth league umpires, was sponsored by the Michigan High School Athletic Association and the ABUA. 2005 ABUA memberships were included in the registration fee. The 15th Annual Bruce Doane Sr. Umpire Camp will be held February 3 - 5, 2006.

Here are two testimonials from the camp:

I just wanted to share some of my thoughts on the awesome umpire clinic that was put on over the weekend. I'm 23 and have done five high school games but I've been doing Little League games since 16 and I thoroughly enjoy the skill. This was my first clinic and it really broke me down. It taught me I wasn't a good umpire and what needs to be done for my work ethic to change. I just have to say that everything said about the camp was put into action. For instance, there was no down time at any cage, class, etc. The instructors were truly there for the campers. Never once did I get the feeling they were trying to humiliate me. Never once did the instructors show impatience, no matter how many times a guy forgot to stand up and call the strike. The instructors never said how good they were; you could just tell by their conduct. And finally, I graduated from Eastern Michigan in April with a Physical Education degree so I know a lot about giving positive feedback and how much I hate the words, "Good job." Your staff of instructors ALWAYS used positive feedback first, then corrective feedback. I never heard negative instruction and the words "Good job" were rarely used. Don't be surprised if you see me next year.

Thanks again,

*Nathan Haag
Cass City, MI*

Dear Runch,

I just wanted to thank you for all the support and confidence you gave me at the camp. It was appreciated and I know that I am ready for this upcoming season.

The Bruce Doane Sr. Umpire Camp is one of the best for an aspiring umpire. The uniqueness of the camp is that the focus is on you and your personal development as an umpire. The instructors tailor their teaching to meet your skill level. I also like the fact that one set of baseball rules (NFHS) is discussed. Too many clinics provide instruction on multiple sets of rules and get caught up in rule differences; the Doane Camp does not. I'm looking forward to returning next year.

By the way, you many not have noticed, but you were with me last night as I completed my first-ever clinic as an instructor. THANKS!!!

John Vito
Chicago



ABUA-USA Baseball Agreement Official

ABUA and USA Baseball recently agreed to a working partnership whereby ABUA will provide umpiring assigning services to USA Baseball for national and international competition.

In the U.S. and, specifically, the North Carolina area, Ron Sebastian, Garner, NC, will assign ABUA umpires to work USA Baseball competitions. Umpire game fees in 2005 for U.S. competition will be \$125. Transportation, hotel and incidental expenses will be the responsibility of the umpire.

Rich Fetchiet, Ann Arbor, MI, and Dick Runchey, Plymouth, MI, ABUA chairman and chairman of the IBAF Umpire Subcommittee, will make umpire assignment recommendations to USA Baseball, when requested, for International Baseball Federation competitions. Only ABUA umpires will be assigned to work international competition on behalf of USA Baseball. USA Baseball or IBAF will reimburse ABUA umpires for travel expenses.

ABUA umpires interested in working USA Baseball competition in the U.S. should send an umpire resume to Ron Sebastian, 103 Argyle Court, Garner, NC 27529.

Umpires interested in international assignments should send an umpire resume to Rich Fetchiet, 4083 Lake Forest Drive East, Ann Arbor, MI 48108.

In addition, ABUA, in conjunction with the IBAF, will endeavor to schedule umpire-training programs for amateur baseball umpires from the U.S. and abroad at the Cary, NC, USA Baseball training complex. Specifically, ABUA will conduct umpire-training programs before national and international events at the USA Baseball training complex.



Honig's March Promotion for ABUA Members Only

Wilson West Vest Platinum. Wilson's upper level umpire chest protector features a plastic armor shell, nylon lining and open cell foam padding. Additional side padding and neck pad provides comfort. Wilson "W" and MLB logo on front of protector. Charcoal color, 13" length only. Retail price is \$159.95. **ABUA MEMBER SPECIAL PRICE: \$139.95.**



To order, call 1-800-468-3284 and identify yourself as an ABUA member.



NASO vs. ABUA Insurance Coverage

"In my unpaid professional opinion, the ABUA has the most cost-effective and superior coverage for umpires.
by Greg Howard

My best recommendation as a former insurance professional is to buy a sports official insurance policy that covers at least \$1 million in liability and defense costs. Even if you win, your defense costs could very well run over \$40,000 if a case goes to a two or three day trial.

You may say you can't afford insurance. My experience is you CANNOT AFFORD TO GO WITHOUT IT!

Plan Comparisions

Membership Costs and Event Coverage

NASO is \$94 yearly and ABUA is \$40. NASO covers for all recognized sports, and ABUA covers for baseball and softball.

Policy Limits

NASO provides a higher limit of \$3 million per occurrence and \$4 million aggregate coverage. ABUA provides a very adequate \$1 million per occurrence and \$2 million aggregate.

ABUA provides \$100,000 accidental injury medical coverage with a \$250 deductible.

NASO provides a medical benefit plan, but only if you are assaulted, of up to \$5000 with a \$250 deductible. This coverage pays 80% of usual and customary medical expenses as defined by the policy. I don't see any accidental injury coverage, i.e., you trip on a dropped bat and blow out your knee or ankle. If NASO provides this coverage, someone please direct me to that information, and I will revise my analysis accordingly.

NASO also provides a \$3000 legal fees reimbursement, if you are assaulted; however, this coverage pays only 60% of legal fees until the \$3000 has been paid. After that, all legal fees are on your own. [If you are assaulted and can prove it and the perpetrator has money/insurance available, you will have no problem getting an attorney in most states to take the claim at no upfront cost to you. You will pay the attorney a percentage of the amount recovered, as allowed by law in nearly all states.]

ABUA provides a loss-of-game-fee benefit that will pay up to \$100 per week for games lost due to injury while officiating (maximum payable is \$2,000 for up to 26 weeks; seven-day waiting period).

NASO's basic insurance plan that comes with the \$94 membership does not provide loss of game fee coverage, except if you lost fees due to injury while being assaulted. In which case, the limit is \$500.

NASO does provide loss of game fee coverage as an optional coverage. For \$25 per year, you can purchase game fee coverage of \$50 per game and \$1000 maximum per year, up to 26 weeks. For \$75, you can purchase coverage for \$100 per game with a \$2000 maximum, up to 26 weeks. For \$100, you can purchase coverage of up to \$400 per game, \$4000 maximum in a year, up to 52 weeks.

Analysis

Based on the premium charged by both organizations (NASO \$94 and ABUA \$40), excluding discounts and publications, the ABUA coverage is the most cost-effective for someone who works baseball and softball only. The ABUA's medical insurance is far superior. There is no additional premium for ABUA's loss of game fee coverage, while NASO only provides this coverage for an additional cost.

In my unpaid professional opinion, the ABUA has the most cost-effective and superior coverage for umpires. In a discussion of umpire liability, Richard_Siegel wrote:

"I am not aware of any case where an umpire has been successfully found to liable in a lawsuit for negligence on the field. However, that doesn't mean an umpire cannot have 'liability problems,' or better stated as 'legal problems.'

"Even though we most likely would not be found liable in case, that doesn't prevent any citizen looking for a scapegoat from hiring a lawyer and filing a lawsuit against you. Once you are served with a summons, you must hire your own lawyer to defend you (an expense you can't recover even if you win the lawsuit) and endure the many months, if not years, of interrogatories, discovery sessions, witness subpoenas, postponement, continuances and of course the trial itself. All that adds up to a lot of lost time from your real jobs and a lot anxiety and frustration that somebody is trying to make you pay for something you're not responsible for.

"Therefore, even though we know a lawsuit against us as a sports official will not likely prevail, we should always act to prevent them nonetheless, if only to deter the waste of our time that lawsuit will cause to your life." - RBS

Of course, we should always look to avoid problems that might lead to litigation. Fifteen years as an insurance adjuster and agent before my final retirement from that gawdawful profession taught me the value of being careful as I saw what litigation did to destroy the peace of mind of many people.

And of course, no one who engages in business of any kind, and officiating is a business, should ever do so without insurance. Almost all officials in the amateur ranks are self-employed businesses, and under the law would be called "sole proprietorships," unless you have set up some sort of corporate entity for yourself. This means that, if you were to be found liable in any way, you personally would have to pay for any judgment from your personal assets, i.e., home, income, savings, etc.

As Richard so aptly pointed out, you would have to also pay for defense costs which might not be recovered if you won, unless by some incredible luck a judge were to rule that the suit against you was "frivolous" in the eyes of the law. This is so rare that I've only seen it happen one time in all those years of handling claims.

As an Alabama High School Athletic Association umpire, I'm covered by the state's plan for liability, but ONLY FOR AHSAA sanctioned events. They will do nothing for me if I am sued for summer ball or collegiate contests.

So, several years ago, I bought an ABUA membership and kept it current. This covers me for defense costs and judgments for any baseball I work. For \$40, this is an outstanding value. Other plans are available from NASO, and I will analyze the benefits and differences below.

The only other possible way to cover yourself would be to get in touch with an insurance agent, and see what they have to offer. It may be that a personal liability umbrella policy (PLUP) might cover you, but this is not always certain since many of them have policy exclusions for "business related activities." This means that they might not pay if your alleged negligence were found to arise from a money making venture. If you only volunteer as an umpire, you might be covered. But if you receive a check or money of any kind, you very well could not be covered under a PLUP. The average cost of a PLUP when I was selling them was \$140 per year.

Richard Siegal asked me, as a qualified insurance professional, to evaluate the ABUA and NASO insurance programs and post my findings. I am more than glad to dust off my insurance agent's license and give some broad and general advice. Remember, you may have unique circumstances that might not be addressed here. My advice is given for free and is worth exactly what you paid for it.

First, remember, that many states offer insurance to high school officials while they are working officially sanctioned sporting events. If all you work is officially sanctioned high school events and nothing else, and you have this coverage, you may not need either ABUA or NASO coverage. However, if you work outside events, you most definitely in my opinion need some form of officiating coverage.

Of course, there is nothing precluding an official from purchasing coverage from both entities. However, your coverage would then fall under "insurance stacking" and "joint payment" laws which can vary widely from state to state.



Canada's Gilbert Named 2004 IBAF Umpire of the Year

Baseball Canada recently announced that Don Gilbert has been named as the International Baseball Federation's Umpire of the Year for 2004.

The announcement came following the IBAF's recent executive meeting at the IBAF headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.

"It's quite a surprise," Gilbert said upon learning the news. "There are an awful lot of umpires in the world and for them to recognize an umpire from Windsor, Ont., is hard to imagine."

Gilbert represented Canada at two premier international events last year, officiating at both the 2004 World University Baseball Championship and the 2004 Olympic Summer Games in Athens.

Gilbert was selected as the plate umpire for the gold medal game at the World University Baseball Championship in Chinese Taipei. At the Olympics, he also umpired in the championship game, serving as the third base official.

"We are extremely proud of Don for his accomplishments," said Ray Carter, president of Baseball Canada. "In every event he umpires, particularly at the national and international levels, he is not only a formidable official but a great ambassador of Canadian baseball."

Baseball Canada's umpires' committee supervisor, Gilbert is the third Canadian to receive the IBAF award, joining Howard Chapman and Jim Cressman, who won the award in 1985 and 1990, respectively.

In addition to his regular spring and summer umpiring duties that include Michigan high school games and up to five local games in Windsor each week, Gilbert this year will act as the umpire supervisor for the Baseball Canada bantam girls' national championship, to be held in Fredericton, N.B., Aug. 25-28.



Split personality (The University Star)

Texas State professor calls umpire, referee career like he sees it
Kevin Washburn / Sports Reporter

In an old Saturday Night Live skit starring John Goodman, an NFL referee hosts his own talk show. The referee spends most of his time taking calls from his listeners and answering their questions. Predictably, most of the callers are berating the mild-mannered ref, with one caller even posing the question, "Do you actually have a soul, or are you just filled with excrement where the soul would normally be?" The skit was likely an accurate depiction of what the public thinks of referees, umpires and other sports officials.

[Read full story...](#)



MLB Playing Rules Committee convenes (MLB 02/17/2005)

Passes experimental rule for minor league play in 2005 to improve pace of game

Baseball Commissioner Allan H. (Bud) Selig and Minor League Baseball President Mike Moore announced today the appointments of the nine members of the Major League Baseball Playing Rules Committee.

The Playing Rules Committee oversees the revision, repeal and adoption of Official Baseball Rules, which govern how the game is played in the Major and Minor Leagues. Sandy Alderson, Executive Vice President, Baseball Operations of Major League Baseball, was named chairman of the committee.

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