

The right call

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ABUA Hosts Elite Italian Umpires

The ABUA recently concluded its first international training event as it hosted 13 umpires and two supervisors from the Italian Baseball and Softball Federation (F.I.B.S.) at a March 15-23 umpire camp in Boynton Beach, FL. The goal was to help prepare the umpires for their upcoming baseball season in Italy.

The training camp featured live-game work; on-field International Baseball Federation (IBAF) three- and four-man mechanics



training; plate-work demonstrations and cage drills; classroom presentations and rules discussions/exams; videotape review; and postgame evaluations.

“The ABUA is honored to have hosted such a fantastic group of umpires from the Italian Baseball and Softball Federation,” said Ted Breidenthal, ABUA executive director. “Their willingness to learn and passion to improve their skills enhanced their own professional development, while at the same time giving the F.I.B.S. higher-skilled and better prepared umpires for the upcoming championship season in Italy.”

The instructors for the camp were Dick Runchey, Plymouth, MI; Dave Yeast, Frontenac, MO; and Kyle McNeely, Cincinnati. Alan Zeff, umpire coordinator for Blue Staffing Baseball Umpire Association, Inc., assisted the

ABUA in pulling together the logistics for the training camp.

“The teaching and learning that took place was phenomenal,” said Runchey, a 2002 ABUA Hall of Fame inductee and the lead clinician for the training camp. “The improvement the umpires made from the first day to the last is a testament to how hard

they all worked and how much they wanted to learn and improve. It truly was a special week.”

Riccardo Fraccari, who is the current

president of the Italian Baseball and Softball Federation, was instrumental in organizing the arrangements from Italy and making the camp a reality. Fraccari initially requested this type of training camp in January when he met with ABUA officials in Dallas before his enshrinement into the ABUA Hall of Fame. The F.I.B.S. has indicated a desire to contract with the ABUA for another training camp this fall. The fall camp is designed to offer Italian umpires the opportunity to work a number of college baseball games in the U.S.

In addition to the intensive training camp they attended, the umpires enjoyed a few South Florida tourist excursions, including trips to Hollywood Beach, a St. Louis Cardinals versus Atlanta Braves spring training game, and a Miami Hurricanes college baseball game in Coral Gables.

ABUA Umpires To Work Perfect Game Tourney

ABUA members will get first crack at the umpire assignments for the prestigious Perfect Game/Baseball America World Wood Bat Championship October 25-28 at Roger Dean Stadium Complex in Jupiter, FL.

Blue Staffing Baseball Umpire Association, Inc., in Boynton Beach, FL, will assign the umpires for this championship event. BSBUA's policy is to give first priority to ABUA umpires who have demonstrated a high level of academic and experiential umpiring ability. Minimum qualifications include participation in at least one organized clinic and experience umpiring at the high school varsity level. Collegiate um-

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ABUA Hall of Fame

Keeping Up With “The Jones”



Bob Jones (right)
with son Bryan at the
2001 ABUA Hall of Fame dinner

It's hard to keep an objective approach when writing about Bob Jones. So, let me say before I begin, that this article will not be written with the impersonal third person voice that is my usual approach. I've known Bob Jones since 1989, and in the 13 years since, I have grown to admire and respect him, first as the finest umpire supervisor for whom I have worked, and secondly but most importantly, as an honorable and decent man who has become a close personal friend. I interviewed Bob for this article; but very little of it will be in this article. I think I'm just going to write a story about Bob and Dan.

Back in 1989, the NCAA embarked on a new direction to standardize umpire training and evaluation. Headed by Jon Bible and today by Dave Yeast, the NCAA created the National Umpire Program. As the administrator of the Colorado Collegiate Umpire Association, I saw this as an opportunity to help some of our umpires get into the national development program and perhaps into the NCAA Division I regional tournament. Back then, Bob was the regional evaluator for the Midwest, including Colorado. He was invited by the CCUA to come to Colorado. I didn't think he would come because there wasn't a lot of baseball being played out here. We didn't have much to offer; Wyoming was our best stop and the Cowboys had never made it out of the league tournament, let alone into a regional. Colorado State and the U.S. Air Force Academy rounded out our side of the Western Athletic Conference. Little did we know that 13 years later, only the Air Force Academy would survive.

Well, Bob showed up. He stayed for four days. By the time he left, he had seen the best we had to offer. After he left, I received a thank-you note and the promise he would work to help us out because he thought several of our guys deserved a shot. In his note, he said all the usual things that most of the time add up to a lot of empty promises. He said he would like to come back, but I figured I would never hear from him again. Since then, he has come back every year and is a featured clinician at the Mile High Advanced Umpire Clinic that is currently in its 10th year and is one of the longest running national clinics in the Western region. As for the “empty” promise to help the Colorado umpires? Five Colorado umpires have been selected to work NCAA Division I regionals. *Continued on page 6*

The right call

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**Professional
Umpires for
Amateur Baseball**

TAX TIPS FOR UMPIRES

I have been asked about the method of handling different umpire pay situations on a federal tax return many times during my 23-year umpiring career. Of course that's after years of people not talking to me at all because I worked for the IRS. The IRS is not interested in the little amount of money made by amateur umpires each year. After you take all the expenses you're entitled to, you probably would have a loss or very little net income with which to pay taxes.

The first thing umpires have to know is that you are a subcontractor, which means you are not under the control of one employer as far as your hours of work, etc. Another item of interest is that you are a sole proprietor, which means you are the sole owner of your business. Because you are a sole proprietor, your umpiring income is reported on a Schedule "C," which is just an attachment to your Form 1040.

Going down a Schedule C:

Line "F" – Accounting method is "cash"

Line "G" – Did you materially participate in the business? Must be Yes

Lines 1, 3, 5 and 7 should reflect the total amount (before any expenses) of umpiring income.

Now let's cover some expenses that can be taken to offset your umpiring income on Schedule C:

◆ **Car and Truck Expense** – This

would be your mileage (34.5 cents per mile this year) to and from a ballgame or any other mileage associated with umpiring. This would include:

- ◆ Mileage driven to evaluate another umpire for a supervisor;
- ◆ Additional mileage while out-of-town umpiring on a weekend (e.g., meals, travel to and from the hotel); and
- ◆ Difference between what you are paid by a conference and 34.5 cents
- ◆ **Note:** Only the mileage from your first job to the second job is deductible, so your mileage always should be from your first to second job. If you have an office in your home, regardless of the size, then the mileage is deductible from home to umpiring.

This should be your biggest expense on the return and may wipe out all of your income. Make sure you have records just in case. If you ever are questioned (audited) and have to produce documentation, make sure the book that you have your mileage in was not printed in a year later than the mileage that you have in the book.

- ◆ **Commissions** – Everyone pays a commission to the local assignor and dues to the local group.
- ◆ **Insurance** – Any insurance premiums you pay for umpiring (ABUA, association dues, Referee Magazine, etc.)
- ◆ **Office Expense** – If you have an office in home (regardless of size), you can deduct part of your mortgage, insurance, telephone, computer (Internet service provider), electric and gas bill. **Note:** The internet monthly fee can

be deducted without office in home because virtually all umpires are now required to have an e-mail address.

- ◆ **Travel, meals and entertainment** – If you spend out of your pocket for meals while out of town, that is deductible. The difference between what the conference gives you and what you actually spend is deductible. If you take someone out to dinner and it relates to umpiring, it is deductible.
- ◆ **Other Expense** – Other expenses that can be deducted are:
- ◆ **Uniforms and Equipment**
- ◆ **Cleaning and Maintenance of Uniforms**
- ◆ **Cell Phone Bill or Car Phone**
- ◆ **Part of your telephone at home**
- ◆ **Publications**

Here are a few IRS publications that might interest you:

- Pub. 1542 – Per Diem Rates
- Pub. 535 – Business Expenses
- Pub. 533 – Self-Employment Tax
- Pub. 334 – Tax Guide for Small Business
- Pub. 463 – Travel, Entertainment, Gift and Car Expenses
- Pub. 587 – Business Use of Your Home

Note: Do yourself a favor -- purchase Turbo Tax and put it on your computer. It is worth the money and will walk you through the preparation process as if you were sitting in front of a preparer.

By Ray Gregson Jr.

ABUA uniforms available exclusively at
Honig's 1-800-468-3284



From the ABUA Web Site - www.umpire.org

The ABUA web site, www.umpire.org, offers members the opportunity to discuss various umpire topics. Below are some excerpts from the site. Take time to go to our site and share your experiences with other umpires.

Bad Habits - In this column, readers comment on bad habits umpires have developed.

Umpires who ask catchers how they are doing on balls and strikes. More than once I've had even NCAA Division I umpires tell me that around the eighth inning they asked the catchers how many pitches they had missed and were told none or one or two and thus concluded that they had had a helluva day. In the law there is the "captive audience" concept; as applied here, the catcher is a captive audience. Just exactly what does one expect that a catcher is going to say when the plate umpire quizzes him about the strike zone? "Geez, blue, you've really butchered things today"? Not likely. If you want to know what kind of day you had, ask your partner, or if you don't trust him, do your own objective self-analysis. (Deep down inside most of us know whether we were good, OK or sucked.) But for God's sake don't ask a 20-year-old kid who has little or no realistic option other than to (possibly) feed you a line of crap. **Jon Bible**

In our pregame at the cars, I am changing and talking about fly-ball coverage, my partner is catching a smoke, not paying attention and already dressed, because he showed up that way. White socks and mesh hat look good. I say we will work the V for fly ball coverage, he says yeah; I have been umpiring for 25 years.



Game situation, no runners, shallow fly to left center, ball is caught on a run by left fielder. He is sprinting across the diamond yelling, catch, yes batter's out. Same game, ball hit to right, no one on, he sprints into the infield, then signals no catch. Same game, he is in the B, perfectly square to first basemen, like he is sitting on the throne. Ball hit down third base line, left fielder nabs it in foul territory, I say nothing and give a very subtle out signal. He is on the line screaming, "Batter is out." After the inning, he says, with all seriousness, "I picked you up on that one, you need to make sure they knew there was an out." OK partner, thanks. **Anonymous**

What I see that drives men nuts is a guy who has to catch up on the news from both first base coaches every inning! I have seen two umps so engaged in conversation that the catcher

had to come over and tap them on the shoulder to get the inning started! **Richard Siegel**

I believe it is OK for the base umpire to sometimes chat with the first base coach. Also, I chat with my partner between innings maybe two or three times a game. I am not out there to be a "Dirty Harry." An umpire does not need to be stoned faced and isolated. I umpire to help kids and have fun. However, if an umpire is constantly talking to people, then I could see that as a problem. **Anonymous**

Other Bad Habits

1. BU using indicator to keep count and outs. As PU, that's my job. If I screw it up, I'll take the heat.
2. BU visibly eating while in B or C position during live-ball situations.
3. Partner pulling his jersey and/or pants out of a gym bag while not concerned about the wrinkles.
4. Partner showing up two minutes before game time for a varsity HS game, not leaving time for you to do a pregame, then screwing up fly-ball coverage to outfield.
5. Partner shows up 10 minutes before game time for a college game and first words out of his mouth are, "So, how long have you been umping?" Next words from his mouth are, "This game is going to suck; I don't want to be here, and I would have turned it back but I need the money." **Chris Winn**

Association Profile

In each edition of The right call, an umpire association will be profiled to learn what associations are doing to promote professional amateur umpires. This edition's profile is the Lincoln, Nebraska ABUA (LABUA).

The Lincoln, NE, ABUA (LABUA) was founded in the fall of 2000 by Jim Guillatt and Chris Jones. Two additional board members, Dan Fischer and Aaron Hoeft, were voted in this year. In just two years, the LABUA has grown to over 65 umpires, most of whom are individual ABUA members. This group of umpires works mostly Little League, USSSA, American Legion and Adult baseball games.

Last year, the LABUA was honored to work several National Qualifying USSSA tournaments and the USSSA State Finals in Nebraska. LABUA umpires worked over 4,000 games in 2001. This year, several out-of-state tournaments have been added to the schedule, along with three American Legion district tournaments. The group plans to send

umpires to the USSSA regional tournaments and World Series this summer in Kansas City. The LABUA encourages all its members to give back to the baseball



community. "It's really great to see a large group of our umpires attend several different fundraisers that these baseball teams host," said Guillatt. "Attending these various functions allows our association a chance to give back to the same groups that we umpire for all spring and summer."

In order to reduce the financial demands for umpire dues, the

LABUA hosted a unique fundraising event this year. The association's umpires spent two hours cleaning the Lincoln Ice Box Arena after a Lincoln Stars USHL hockey game. The money earned covered 80 percent of each umpire's ABUA individual membership dues. Said Guillatt, "We're a big believer in the ABUA and feel it's important for our members to be individual members. With all the other dues and certification fees our umpires have to pay, this is a great way to help the community, as well as help our umpires offset their dues and fees."

In early February, the LABUA hosted its first ABUA Winter Umpires Clinic. Over 45 umpires from Nebraska, Missouri and Michigan attended the event, which included cage work and on-field mechanics instruction at the University of Nebraska's Cook Pavilion. The ABUA instructors included Dick Runchey, Bill Davis, Bob Jones and Kyle McNeely.

For more information about the LABUA, contact Jim Guillatt at 402/325-9560. **By Jim Guillatt**

USA BASEBALL UPDATE

USA Baseball recently announced that it will conduct the 2002 USA Junior Olympic Baseball Championships (East & West) simultaneously June 21-29 in Jupiter, FL, and Tucson, AZ. Overall, 120 teams will participate in the championship event, with 56 teams competing in the East section and 64 teams playing in the West section. For the second consecutive year, Blue Staffing Baseball Umpire Association, Inc., has contracted with USA Baseball to assign the umpires for the East championship at Roger Dean Stadium Complex in Jupiter, FL. Roger Dean is the Major League spring training site for the St. Louis Cardinals and the Montreal Expos

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ABUA Hall of Fame

Keeping Up With “The Jones”... continued from p. 2

What I realized about Bob Jones, and what I most respect about him, is that in this day of graceful but suspicious promises, Bob is a man of his word. If he says it, he is going to do it. He worked to bring a Colorado crew into the Big 12 Conference. Even though the University of Colorado was without a baseball team, he felt it was his duty as a league supervisor to get the best umpires he could. I was fortunate to be one of the umpires on the crew, along with Ray Belfiore and Keith Bailey. Ray has worked three regionals, Keith is on number eight and was named assistant crew chief for his last regional. Both, indeed, are Colorado's best. Bob helped get them there.

What is truly impressive about Bob is that this story is just not a “Colorado” story. Umpires in Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma can tell the same story. Bob has made a career out of reaching out for umpires and helping to develop them. Chances are that if there is an umpire clinic in the Midwest, Bob Jones is there. If there is a tournament in Oklahoma, Bob is there. “It’s part of the job description,” Jones explains. “I pride myself in knowing my umpires.” But for Jones, knowing his umpires goes far beyond the diamond. “Good umpires and good people” is how Jones looks at his staff. “You’ve got to know what the guys are made of; how important it is to

them,” Jones explains. He sets his standards high and is not afraid to enforce a strict code of conduct. In his duties as coordinator of umpires for the Big 12 and Missouri Valley, he admits, “I’ve dismissed as many people for off-the-field problems as on the field.”

On the field, Jones is a clear-eyed judge of umpires. The Colorado crew got a dose of Jones a couple of years ago after a series at Missouri. As Jones often does, he appeared, unannounced, in the umpire room after the final day, yellow legal pad in hand. What ensued was a thorough, microscopic, six-page critique of the crew. After the Jones Hour was up, Keith Bailey had the classic farewell statement. “Well Bob, we’d like to thank you for the ass chewing!!” Said in a humorous tone, Bailey summed up the connection Jones has with his umpires. Yes, he can be a tough evaluator, but his critiques are done in a respectful fashion despite Jones’ direct and blunt approach. His final statement to the crew? “I want these things changed before I see you again.” And where would Bailey and Belfiore run across Jones again? Both were going to Division I regionals; Bailey to Miami and Belfiore to Stanford. Of his postgame visits Jones explains, “Guys need to know how important it is; accepting criticism and applying it. We can show guys what to do, but if they can’t make the switch...”

How did Jones make the switch from a 30-year-old little league umpire in 1978 to a respected member of the Big 8 staff who recorded 122 consecutive conference and tournament games? “Being in the right spot at the right time,”

is how he explains it. He started out at the Midget C level, alone on the field with a bunch of nine-year-olds, but was promoted to the top 17-year-old division by the end of the summer. Then, the next year the big leagues went on strike. Elliot Hawke from the Kansas City Royals called him. “He saw me work a high school game and told me he considered me one of the best four umpires in the KC area.” Jones was assigned opening day at Royals Stadium and worked the next 11 games until the strike was settled. “I didn’t know if I was as good as everybody thought I was,” Jones remembers. “All I knew was this was easier than working Midget C.”

Steve Hatchell, then the Big 8 assistant commissioner, had been to one of those games. Later, when he assigned umpires to the Big 8 tournament, Jones got the call and for the next 13 years was a mainstay at the postseason confab. This experience formed Jones’ approach to umpiring and the best advice he can give to a new umpire. “Work every game like somebody is there watching. It can make a difference in your umpire career.” As a supervisor, Bob Jones has made the difference in more than one umpire career. But as far as Bob and Dan are concerned, Dan will tell you it goes much deeper than that.

By Dan Weikle

USA Baseball/Clinic Update

USA Baseball Update *(Continued from p. 5)*



A total of 60 umpires will be assigned to this nine-day event that will feature over 200 games.

For the fifth consecutive year, the West championship will be held at the Hi Corbett and Kino Sports Complexes, the Major League spring training sites for the Colorado Rockies, Arizona Diamondbacks and Chicago White Sox. A total of 70 umpires will be assigned to the West championship. ABUA umpires interested in game assignments at the East championship should send a copy of their season

schedule and the name and phone number of their assignor to Alan Zeff, P.O. Box 3078, Boynton Beach, FL 33424. His e-mail address is umpirei@aol.com.

ABUA umpires interested in game assignments at the West championship should send a phone number of their assignor or supervisor to Kevin Daugherty, 520 Jentilly Lane, Chandler, AZ 85226. His e-mail address is kevind-acua@msn.com.

Perfect Game Tourney *(Continued from p. 1)*

-piring is preferred. A total of 40 umpires are needed for the four-day tournament, which will feature over 1,500 prospects and 600 scouts.

ABUA umpires interested in game assignments at the Perfect Game/Baseball America World Wood Bat Championship should send a copy of their season sched-

ule and the name and phone number of their assignor to Alan Zeff, P.O. Box 3078, Boynton Beach, FL 33424. His e-mail address is umpirei@aol.com.

Mile High Clinic Update

Slots are still open but filling up fast for the 10th Annual Mile High Advanced Umpire Clinic June 19-23, 2002, in Denver. The clinic is sponsored by the Colorado High School Baseball Umpires Association, the Colorado Collegiate Umpires Association and the ABUA. Enrollment is limited to the first 30 umpires. The registration deadline is May 15, 2002.

The clinic will offer a complete instructional program for umpires who wish to improve in the areas of game management, philosophy and overall umpiring technique. It is designed for the high school ump-

ire who is looking to move up to the varsity ranks or the college umpire looking for advanced training. A top-flight group of clinicians and instructors, including Dick Runchey, Joe Burlison, Bob Jones, Dan Weikle and Keith Bailey, will lead the clinic.

Umpires will be videotaped and critiqued. Instruction will take place in a batting cage-pitching tunnel setting, as well as during actual games at the Connie Mack (17-18 year olds) and Legion C (15-16 year olds) levels.

The clinic will begin at 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 19, with a wel-

come and get together at the Denver Elks Lodge. On Thursday and Friday (June 20-21), umpires will work three games (10 a.m., 1 p.m., 4 p.m.) at each of eight sites. There will be two games at each of eight sites Saturday and Sunday (June 22-23).

For ABUA members, the cost is \$200. The cost is \$240 for non-members. Send a check with name, address, city, state, zip, phone and e-mail to: Dan Weikle, 1115 Aberdeen Drive, Broomfield, CO 80020. For more information, contact Dan at 303/469-4868 or dweik34@aol.com.