

The right call

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1
JANUARY 15, 2001

ABUA Forms Working Alliance With KSHSAA

OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS—The ABUA has entered into an agreement to conduct three one-day clinics this spring for umpires who work high school baseball in Kansas. The alliance was formed with the Kansas State High School Activities Association. The goal of the clinics is to improve the knowledge and proficiency of KSHSAA baseball umpires with respect to playing rules, mechanics, plate work, base work, play situations and rulings (based on NFHS rules and umpire mechanics), and other areas deemed important to the professional growth and development of KSHSAA umpires. Bob Homolka (ABUA member/NCAA umpire), who will help coordinate the clinics, stated, "This alliance is a tremendous opportunity to further develop umpires in Kansas." A core committee of leaders from Kansas and the ABUA will develop the curriculum and agenda for the clinics, and establish the dates and sites. The details should be finalized and announced this month. "This is a sig-

nificant step for both the ABUA and the Kansas State High School Activities Association," said Ted Breidenthal, ABUA executive director. "High school umpires in Kansas



will experience hands-on, intensive training throughout the day-long clinics by some of the top clinicians in the country. I'm certain the umpires will learn a number of techniques that will help them when they take the field this spring. I'm also confident the KSHSAA will see an immediate improvement in the quality of officiating." Said Rick Bowden, assistant director of the KSHSAA, "It is the KSHSAA belief that this joint effort by the KSHSAA and the ABUA and its members will improve the profes-

sionalism and abilities of any and all KSHSAA registered umpires who attend the clinics. I am confident that those umpires who attend the clinics, regardless of their experience, will leave with a much better understanding of the mechanics of umpiring and a greater sense of confidence as they approach the baseball season." This is the first time the KSHSAA has formed an alliance with an outside agency to conduct day-long, intensive educational programs for its baseball umpires. Currently, the state conducts nine meetings across the state where umpires discuss new rules and take an open-book rules exam. These meetings, which will be held over the next few months, also are attended by coaches. The clinics conducted by the ABUA will be separate from the rules meetings conducted across the state. For more information about the ABUA-KSHSAA clinics, please contact Ted Breidenthal at the ABUA (913/648-8677) or Rick Bowden at the KSHSAA (785/235-9201).

ABUA Inducts Four Into Hall of Fame at Yearly Banquet

OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS—The ABUA honored a third class of inductees at its annual ABUA Hall of Fame Banquet January 6, 2001, at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville. Before a packed house of 120 friends, families and umpires, the ABUA inducted Bob Jones, Anibal Rosario, Louis Spry and Dale Williams into its Hall of Fame. The inductees have contributed over a century of outstanding service to amateur baseball that will be remembered for years to come. To see Rosario's family travel from Puerto Rico, Jones' son pay tribute to his dad, Spry light up the audience with his typical taste of humor and Williams (a current NFL official) to tell his career stories of officiating

that may be second to none was a night to remember. "It truly was a memorable evening for four very deserving



L-R, Williams, Rosario, Spry, Jones

individuals," said Ted Breidenthal, ABUA executive director. "These four men have joined an elite fraternity that is reserved only for the best of the best. Their passion and commit-

ment to amateur baseball umpiring is a model for those umpires who aspire to greatness." Jones, Rosario, Spry and Williams join an already impressive list of inductees symbolic of ABUA's mission to develop the most professional umpires in amateur baseball. The first class of ABUA inductees in 1999 included Richard Alexander, Ray Munari, Tony Patch, Tom Ravashiere, Hank Rountree, Bud Schoephlin and Gus Steiner. In 2000, the ABUA inducted Art Blair, Doug Cossey, Curley Clement, Alan Keen and C. J. Mitchell. Stay tuned to future "Right Call" editions for bio spotlights on these four outstanding inductees. The ABUA tips its hat to these four men in blue.

ABUA Hall of Fame

The Candy Man Can

Things didn't start off very sweet for the umpire who would become known as "The Candy Man" to a generation of players and fans in the Cape Cod League. You would think working for free would have soured his umpiring career, but as Curley said, "I loved baseball." And with that, he worked little league contests for two years, with no pay for the love of the game.

Four years later things weren't much sweeter when Clement was asked to work in the Cape Cod League, one of America's premier amateur circuits. There wasn't a lot of money involved for the rookie arbiter either. He paid his dues, literally, when he was paid for his services after they passed the hat. "The plate guy got all the bills, and the guy on the bases got the change," Clement recalled. However, it wasn't long until the pot sweetened, and Clement was asked to become a staff umpire by Danny Silva, who had become the Umpire in Chief for the league.

Soon the name of Curley Clement became famous up and down the Eastern Seaboard from Massachusetts to Georgia. "You name it, I've been there," recalled Clement. From February to March he is in Atlanta, where he has worked for 30 years.

Reminder: Send all ABUA correspondence to PO Box 99482 Louisville, KY 40269-0482

From March to June he migrates back North, working in The Big East, Northeast Athletic Conference and the Ivy League.

And he plans to keep up his yearly gaddings. "I haven't retired," he chided. "I worked 110 ball games



this year," a heavy load for a man of 81. "I'm still a young kid," he quipped. He keeps busy with a full slate of Babe Ruth games, AAU, and the Yawkey League, named for famed Red Sox owner Tom Yawkey.

Where some umpires might exert that control in a heavy handed fashion, Clement takes a more sugar-coated approach. "I buy 50-55 pounds of candy every spring and I feed the players candy. When I walk on the field I have players come up to me and ask, 'Curley, where's my candy.'"

For Clement, the sweetest deal of all is how people have regarded him during a 44-year career, which has seen him work 12 ECAC Tournaments, 16 Regionals, and two College World Series. "My father is a legend as far as the Cape Cod League is concerned," recalled Clement's daughter Gail. "They all know my dad and they love him to death."

by Dan Wiekke

VISIT OUR WEB SITE
www.abua.com

The right call

ABUA Officers

Kenny Eldridge	President
Gus Rodriguez	1st VP
Bill Davis	2nd VP
John Magnusson	3rd VP
Kyle McNeeley	4th VP
Chuck Barnett	Sec/Tres
Jon Bible	Director
Mike Kiernan	Director
Nick Zibelli	Director
Jim Garman	Director
David Rogers	Director
Dave Yeast	Director

Executive Director

Ted Breidenthal
tbreidenthal@prodigy.net

Executive Editor

John Kleis
jekleis@hotmail.com

Contributing Editors

John Stransky
John Johnston
Jason Reed
Marty McDermott
Dan Weikle
Dick Runchey

These organizations, through various personnel also offer on-going assistance to

The right call:

NCAA
NFHS
ABUA
USA Baseball

Copy Editor

Melany Bray-Kleis

The *Right Call* is published quarterly. All rights are the property of *The Amateur Baseball Umpires Association, Inc.*, 9227 England, Overland Park, KS 66212. To join the ABUA call 502-240-0948 or email cbar10111@aol.com.

**Professional
Umpires for
Amateur Baseball**

From The Executive Director's Desk...

The ABUA's recent alliance with the Kansas State High School Activities Association (see front page article) to provide three, day-long intensive clinics for high school baseball umpires this spring is, in my mind, the single most important development in the short history of the Association. The fact that state high school leaders in Kansas have the confidence and trust in the ABUA to conduct its ongoing professional development program speaks volumes about our people, resources, curriculum and teaching abilities. A meeting will be held January 28 to establish

the dates, sites and curriculum. I see this type of relationship growing in the near future as other state high school associations look for assistance in presenting a curriculum that is national in scope, and one which will help further the development and proficiency of their high school baseball umpires. There is no better execution arm in this country than the ABUA.

For those who attended the Third Annual ABUA Hall of Fame Banquet in Nashville, thanks for making it a memorable evening for all the inductees. A total of 120 attended the dinner honoring Bob Jones, Anibal Rosario,

Spry and Dale Williams. Congratulations, gentlemen, on joining the Hall of Fame.

The 2001 Instructors Clinic also was a great success. A total of 65 attendees enjoyed a full day of clinic presentations at the Opryland Hotel. The all-star list of clinicians included Terry Barmann, Randy Christal, Bill Davis, Bryan Donnelly, Jim Garman, Bob Jones, Kyle McNeely and Dan Pederson. A highlight was a handling situations session with Division I head coaches Skip Bertman of LSU, Mike Martin of Florida State and Danny Hall of Georgia Tech.

ABUA Sets 2001 Camp Schedule

ABUA Whitewater Clinic

Date: March 25, 2001
Site: Whitewater, WI

ABUA St. Louis Camp

Date: September 21-23, 2001
Site: St. Louis, MO
Cost: \$200 ABUA Members/\$250 non-members

ABUA South Florida Camp

Date: September 28-30, 2001
Site: West Palm Beach, FL
Cost: \$200 ABUA Members/\$250 non-members

ABUA Phoenix Camp

Date: November 9-11, 2001
Site: Phoenix, AZ Peoria Sports Complex
Cost: \$200 ABUA Members/\$250 non-members

**To register for any ABUA Camp, go to our website:
www.umpire.org or call Bob Jones at 816-356-5001.**

Other News...

Local Association Insurance

The ABUA has decided against offering an option to purchase an insurance plan written specifically for ABUA local association members. All ABUA local association members have the opportunity to purchase liability insurance through NASO's LOAN program.

2001 Certification Exam

The 2001 certification exams will be mailed at the end of January or early February. Answers will be posted on the web site at www.umpire.org in March and in the April Newsletter.

THE PREGAME CONFERENCE EQUALS A GOOD GAME

Some 10 years ago I began umpiring. I joined a local high school association. Through the years, some of the rules have changed and some of the mechanics have been revised. But, one thing has not changed...the need for a good pregame with your partner. At every level of the game players and coaches prepare. We as umpires must do the same if we are to work as a team on the field.

In our association, and I'm sure in most high school associations, the pregame begins a few days before

the game with a phone call to your partner. This call between partners will confirm game times, game sites, and where to meet. You can decide who will work the plate and bases and other details such as what uniform shirt or jacket to wear. The pregame conference is usually conducted by the more experienced umpire. It may be the umpire-in-chief if both umpires. In either case, it must be done and it must be thorough. Several baseball organizations provide a pregame checklist to follow. You can get one from most college umpire associations, NCAA conferences or the ABUA.

A good checklist will cover how you will handle rotation plays, check swings, fair/foul coverage, balls leaving the field of play, verbal and non verbal communications, trouble balls in the outfield, ejections, and other unusual situations that may arise. Include as many items on the list as you can. Good pregame conferences promote good communication and allow for open discussion. Most of all, the pregame conference and checklist will help you begin to work as a team before the game ever starts.

BY: Marty McDermott

USA Baseball Updates

An Olympic Moment...In Sydney

ABUA member umpires Gus Rodriguez and Rich Fetchiet were the two U.S. umpires appointed to the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia, by the International Baseball Association. They joined 16 other umpires from 12 countries assigned to umpire the baseball competition. Gus and Rich expressed how honored they were to represent their country, USA Baseball and the ABUA.

To give you a feel for their "Olympic experience," we have shared below a sampling of the many highlights from their trip "down under" . . . *Living for 3 weeks at the Officials Village at

Sydney University and socializing with referees, umpires, and technical offi-



L - R: Rich Fetchiet, Gus Rodriguez

cialists from all over the world. *Umpire clinics, pregame meetings, and on-field "discussions" in three or more

languages at one time. *Umpiring intense and professional-level baseball. *Being a part of the Opening Ceremonies and experiencing an overwhelming sense of pride and patriotism as the U.S. contingent entered the stadium. *Attending Olympic competitions in many different sports. *Experiencing cultures and traditions from all over the world. *Lunching with Tom Lasorda and other baseball dignitaries. *Harbour cruises, tours, shopping, dining and socializing in one of most beautiful cities in the world. Congratulations to Gus Rodriguez and Rich Fetchiet for representing us in a first-class manner both on and off the field.

Illinois Umpire Goes To World Junior Championships

I represented the USA at the 2000 International Baseball Federation World Junior Championships August 4-14, 2000, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The host country provided seven of the eighteen umpires and the other countries (USA, Cuba, Australia, Mexico, China, Taiwan, Russia, Korea,

the Netherlands, South Africa, and Italy) each provided one umpire. On any given game there were four umpires from different countries represented on the field! The teams were all-star teams made up of some of the best 17-18 year olds in the world. Korea beat the USA 9-7 in 13 innings for the Gold Medal. The abilities of the umpires varied greatly-the

Canadian umpires and the Australian were very polished – and critiques by the supervisors indicated that the ABUA did a great job of preparing me for this international competition. As with any tournament, I made many new friends – who just happen to be umpires from all over the world!

By: John Johnston



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

"The Association Could Have Been Ruined"

That's been the lament shared by Associations that felt they would have suffered financial ruin if they had not been covered by liability insurance policies. In our lawsuit-crazy society, many Associations believe it is too easy to become defendants in costly and time-consuming lawsuits. And that's even if they don't lose their case. Here's a look at liability insurance and some of the reasons it has saved Associations thousands and thousands of dollars. With medical bills as they are and insurance plans not always covering 100 percent of the charges when hurt, the injured party wants to ensure its bills are paid. If their own insurance does not cover the bills, they will look for other means. Therefore, lawsuits are filed against Associations because their insurance

offers a possible means of recovery for the injured party. In many liability claims, someone has to



show the court that the Association/Official was NOT negligent. It is no longer a luxury to be covered by liability insurance; it often is a requirement. Associations that have held meetings at the same school for years are being told they have to provide proof of insurance before they can use the school again.

Incorporating Your Association

In our litigious society, umpire associations, like other business entities, have contemplated the decision of incorporation. As an attorney and college umpire, I offer you some important considerations to help you in this process. These considerations are not intended as legal advice, but rather food for thought. **Limited Liability:** Unquestionably, the single greatest advantage of the corporation over the partnership is insulation from liability. A shareholder's liability is said to be limited to his investment as it relates to financial risks, and corporate participants are shielded from tort liability. Given the number of lawsuits against individual officials and associations in recent years, insulation from tort liability is of obvious importance. **Tax Benefits:** A partnerships' profits are included in the partners' individual tax returns. Current tax laws have changed to offer some corporate entities the benefit of "pass

through" taxation, charging taxes at only one level. As associations produce greater profits, tax consequences become an increasingly important consideration. **Centralization of Management:** In a general partnership, each partner has an equal voice in business and is empowered to make binding decisions on behalf of the business with or without input from partners. The advantage offered by the corporate form of business is management authority is vested in an individual or group of individuals elected for that purpose, and bound by law to exercise their duty for the benefit of the corporation. Incorporating thus injects some management "red tape," but provides operating security. If your association is considering incorporation, I encourage you to contact an attorney or CPA.

By: Jason Reed

Many entities ask to be named as additional insureds on the liability policy. All of this may seem a bit unsettling but there are easy ways to provide an Association with the appropriate coverage at reasonable cost. Perhaps the most important thing an Association can do is understand the importance of coverage. It cannot be stressed enough because of the exposures that exist in the activities of the Association and its members. The responsibility of the Association is to understand the risks and provide insurance to cover its members should something occur. The Association could lose everything if they don't. [If you have questions about the ABUA's Local Association insurance program, please contact John Stransky at 800/727-7642 or john@specialmarkets.com.]

Newsletter Increases High School Coverage

The ABUA is expanding its high school umpire newsletter coverage in an effort to broaden the scope of infor-



mation to our members. We have received numerous requests to include more high school umpire information. Starting with this issue, the ABUA will feature more articles specifically designed to reach the high school umpires who are ABUA members.

High School Rule Changes

The National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) has announced the 2001 baseball rule changes. Following is a summary of the new changes:

1. The “time of pitch” has been further defined during the windup or set position to mean:
 - a. Windup-stepping onto the pitcher’s plate with hands in front of body or the first movement when the hands are at the side or bringing hands together when hand is either at side or behind back.
 - b. Set-after coming to a complete or discernible stop, starts any movement that commits to pitch and the pitcher must come to a complete or discernible stop with both hands in front of his body **at** or below his chin.
2. The diameter of a legal bat cannot exceed 2 5/8” at its thickest point and shall not weigh more than 3 ounces less than its length (e.g. a 34-inch-long bat cannot weigh less than 31 ounces).
3. Illegal bats include: bats that have been altered or deface the ball or do not meet the diameter/length/weight parameters. Bats that are broken, cracked or dented are illegal and should be removed from the game when discovered without penalty.
4. The requirement for catcher’s equipment (helmet and mask) to meet NOCSAE standards does not go into effect until January 1, 2003.
5. Teams can wear a commemorative/memorial/special circumstance patch on the jersey not to exceed 2 square inches. The patch shall be appropriately placed in a dignified manner not to compromise the integrity of the uniform.
6. The UIC must verify with both head coaches the uniform compliance, new rules and good sportsmanship expectations of participants before to the start of a contest.