

# The right call

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4  
October 15, 2001

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## Renew ABUA Membership NOW

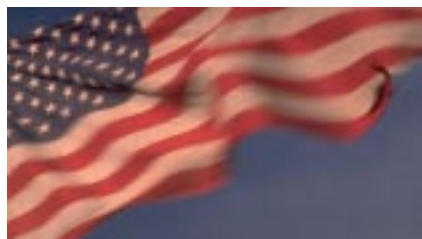
The ABUA is currently accepting membership renewals for all current and interested new members. The 12-month membership period takes effect January 1, 2002. Previously the ABUA membership period ran from August 1 - July 31. All 2001 ABUA memberships were extended five months in order to change our membership period. **The current ABUA membership stands at 1,100**

**members.** To renew or join the ABUA, fill out the enclosed form and send a \$35 check or money order payable to ABUA, c/o Sports Association Management, Inc., 810 Baltimore, Suite 200, Kansas City, MO 64105. You also may join via online registration by going to the ABUA website: [www.umpire.org](http://www.umpire.org). All current ABUA memberships will expire December 31, 2001.

## God Bless America...United We Stand

You have just arrived at the game site and are preparing for the game. You meet your partners, gather your gear and start your pregame. It's time to strap it on this day and work the plate. You start with your undergarments, put on your shined plate shoes, buckle-up your shin guards and strap on the chest armor. You then put on your new navy plate shirt with your association's bold color patch on the pocket and don the sharply crowned hat. You stand in front of a mirror proudly as you put on your mask. All indications are you are ready to go. As you start to walk away, your mind wanders...**it wanders back to September 11, 2001...**at that moment you sink into a chair and gasp for breath. Your thoughts relive the devastation, the horror and the unthinkable terrorist acts associated with that dark day that will forever live in your mind, and the minds of people all over the

world. You again visualize those horrific scenes: the planes that crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the crater in the rural field in western Pennsylvania, the collapsing buildings, fires and people running for their lives. Most of all you



remember the victims, their families, loved ones, the heroes, the rescue efforts, police, firefighters, government and health officials along with the thousands of volunteers who assisted during this unforgettable tragedy. You remember how New York, Washington DC, this country and the world came together and the resiliency that has been shown to respond to such chaos. Your partner taps you on the shoulder and asks you if you are okay. You nod yes and stand up

to walk to the field. Reality and the present day begin to filter back into your mind as you stand at the plate. You stand there as the national anthem is played and the flag is raised with your hand over your heart. You are overwhelmed with inner emotion as the flag blows in the wind, the flag that symbolizes our freedom and why on this day you are fortunate to be an American. You are also reminded of the fellow sports officials who perished that day and all brothers and sisters who were lost. You take a moment to offer a silent prayer remembering those not here with you. And then the first pitch is delivered that reminds you the games will go on with victories and losses, but forever in your mind, you will never forget the biggest loss; those that died so heroically that sunny September day. **The ABUA extends its deepest sympathies to those lost in this tragedy and shares with the world our thoughts and best wishes to all the families, loved ones and friends during this very difficult time.**

## Starting Lineup

# Keen on Keene

Alan Keene was an umpire for 30 years and has been an association commissioner for three years. Some might say he jumped from one frying pan right into another frying pan. Even though he may have turned up the heat on the umpires who work in Southern Florida, his results have been impressive. Last year, five umpires under his guidance were picked up by professional baseball from the South Florida Collegiate Baseball Umpires Association (SFCBUA).

The first thing Keene did, after assuming control of the SFCBUA, was to expand the opportunities for his umpires. He embarked on a campaign that more than doubled the South Florida association's contracted schools. His selling point was the quality of his association. "I wanted guys that wanted to work," said Keene. "We also have a great rating system, and umpires are required to work fall ball," Keene explained. Keene requires all umpires to work what amounts to a year-round schedule. "The new guys push the old guys who don't want to put in the time to work in the fall. It's a good situation for everybody."

What Keene is after is a good mixture of experienced veterans and



Alan Keene  
ABUA Hall of Fame

eager youngsters. The combination has been a good one. And Keene's training techniques over the years have improved. Last year, the South Florida group sponsored a successful ABUA clinic. "We followed what (the ABUA clinicians) did. They have a sound instructional package," said Keene, who remembers the old days when all the training a new umpire got was to listen to the veterans and try and copy their mechanics.

Not that Keene didn't learn his lessons well. As an umpire, Keene appeared in seven NCAA Division I Regional Tournaments, and worked the first collegiate game broadcast on ESPN

between Miami and USC. Keene draws on a wealth of baseball experience as a commissioner. A former catcher/first baseman for Ron Fraser at Miami, Keene has seen the game from three different perspectives, all which have a unifying point. "You need the ability to get along," Keene explained. "You have to have the personality to run the ballgame." Judging from the success of the South Florida association, under Keene's direction, the game is getting along just fine.

By Dan Wiekle

## Hall of Famer Passes On

The ABUA would like to extend our sympathies and best wishes to the family and friends of our lost comrade. Former ABUA Hall of Famer (featured in July 2001 Newsletter) **Doug Cossey** died last month of complica-

tions associated with a heart disease. Cossey, from Ann Arbor, MI, graced us with over 30 years of dedicated service to amateur baseball. **THANKS DOUG...WE WILL MISS YOU!!!**

## The right call

Kenny Eldridge	President
Gus Rodriguez	1st VP
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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@abua.com

### Executive Editor

John Kleis  
jekleis@hotmail.com

### Contributing Editors

Jon Bible  
David Rogers  
Kyle McNeeley  
Scott Watkins  
Dan Weikle  
Dick Runchey

**These organizations, through various personnel, also offer ongoing assistance to**

*The right call:*

NCAA  
NFHS  
ABUA  
USA Baseball

### Copy Editor

Melany Bray Kleis

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**Professional  
Umpires for  
Amateur Baseball**

## Former National Coordinator Says Attending Clinics a Must

*Jon Bible, the former NCAA National Umpire Coordinator, recently was asked to talk about an umpire's need to attend clinics and stay abreast of rule and mechanics changes.*

The other day I received an email from an umpire who had been hired to assign nonconference games for a college and wondered how to deal with some veteran umpires who have said they will not, as he insists, attend any NCAA clinics next year. My initial reaction was to not use them!!

Unfortunately, some of us old-timers occasionally get a bit too big for our britches or carry an arrogance that we don't need clinics or updates. We think that going to clinics is somehow beneath us or is unnecessary. We think that we should be allowed to continue doing the same things we have been doing for years and continue to receive the same caliber of game assignments even though we don't stay current on rules, mechanics and philosophies. I disagree. This attitude is unfair to the players and coaches who deserve to have umpires who are up to date on all phases of the game, as well as to their umpiring colleagues who do take the time and spend the money to attend clinics. I started umpiring in 1966 and have worked Division I since 1974. Numerous changes have taken place since my early days, when, for example, the plate umpire was not even allowed to appeal a check-swing to the base umpire or that umpires couldn't gather on the field to discuss a call. Yet I am the first to acknowledge that there are always new things for me to learn and that I owe it to myself and to those with and for whom I work to keep abreast of new developments. I must at all costs try to get the call/rule right. In my view, the bottom line is simple: if you aren't willing to stay current by attending clinics -- and, for that matter, staying in good physical shape, studying the rules on your own before and throughout the season, working scrimmages, etc. -- you don't deserve to be working. End of discussion.

*By Jon Bible*

## 4th ABUA Instructors Clinic In Dallas

The ABUA's 4th annual Instructors Clinic will highlight this year's NCAA National Clinic in Dallas. The clinic is scheduled from 10:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. January 12, 2002, at the DFW Airport Marriott. The cost is \$75 and is reserved to the first 75 members who register. The instructors are Dick Runchey, Randy Christal, Jon Bible, Joe Burlison, Bill Davis and Terry Barmann. This year's topics include: *Working the Plate - Teaching of Cage Drills and Mechanics, Qualities of a Good Official, Handling Situations, Teaching Techniques, a Round Table Discussion, Two-man Base Work and Three-man Mechanics.* You may register on-line at [www.umpire.org](http://www.umpire.org) or fill out the enclosed insert and send in along with with a \$75 check.

## 2002 NCAA Clinics Announced

The ABUA has received information on the upcoming 2002 NCAA Umpire Baseball Clinics. **These clinics are open to all college baseball umpires** regardless of certification or level worked. Those individuals interested in working NCAA postseason competition must attend one of these clinics.

### NCAA Umpire Clinic-Dallas, TX

Friday, 1/11/02  
 11:30-2:00 Meeting Conference Coordinators  
 6:00-10:00 Hospitality Suite  
 Saturday, 1/12/02  
 9:00-10:30 NCAA Umpire Clinic  
 10:30-5:30 Conference Meetings  
 6:00-9:00 ABUA Hall of Fame Banquet  
 Sunday, 1/13/02  
 10:30-12:30 NCAA Closing Session  
 12:30-1:30 Former CWS Umpire Meeting

Marriott DFW  
 8440 Freeport Parkway  
 Irving, TX 75063  
 972-929-8800

Contact number above for \$75 NCAA Rate

### Collegiate Baseball Umpires Super Clinic Weekend-Atlanta, GA

Friday, 1/18/02 - 6 - 9 p.m.  
 Saturday, 1/19/02 - 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
 Sunday, 1/20/02 - 12 - 4 p.m.

Atlanta Capitol Plaza Hotel  
 450 Capitol Avenue, SW  
 Atlanta, GA 30312  
 404-591-2000

Contact Ann Hulk: 800-589-7952 (ask for Southern Umpires Group \$72.00 rate). Rooms must be reserved by 12/18/01. Please contact: [scollump@aol.com](mailto:scollump@aol.com) (Tony Thompson) if you plan on attending.

### ECAC Clinic

Saturday, 2/9/02 - 1 - 5 p.m.  
 Albertus Magnus College  
 New Haven, CT

Contact Nick Zibelli for details:  
[nzibelli@ecac.com](mailto:nzibelli@ecac.com) or 508-771-5060, X-250

## The Rule Book

### 2002 High School Rule Changes

“Rules, we don’t need no stinking rules! Let’s play ball.” And so the catcher muttered as the plate conference concluded. Rules exist for many reasons. The purpose of a rules code is to provide consistency in the game, protect the integrity of the sport, allow participants to win or lose based on their skills and abilities, provide a safe environment for the players, and to ensure that the activity is conducted in accordance with the purposes of interscholastic athletics. High school rules must be adapted specifically to the needs of high school players. For the 2002 high school baseball season, there are several important rule changes that need to be known and understood. While we will go into more detail in later newsletters, we do want to provide a glimpse of what is just around the last snowfall. Beginning January 1, 2003, all catcher’s helmet and mask combinations shall meet the NOCSAE standard and any helmet or helmet/mask combination shall have full ear protection (dual ear flaps.) The current hockey style masks will meet the re-

quirement of full ear protection and many of them already have passed a NOCSAE standard. Players and coaches have, in the past, been allowed to participate with a



cast, splint or brace as long as it was approved by the umpire-in-chief. Now, those casts, splints and braces must be padded with at least ½ inch of closed cell, slow recovery rubber or other material of the same minimum thickness and having similar physical properties. Also, any player equipment judged by the umpire to be unreasonably dangerous is illegal. Effective January 1, 2003, all nonwood bats shall meet the Ball Exit Speed Ratio (BESR) performance standard. Such bats shall be labeled with a silk screen or other perma-

nent certification mark. Also, a bat that continually discolors a ball (such as leaving a smudge) may be removed from the game with no penalty and at the discretion of the home plate umpire. Beginning with the 2002 season, the 10-run mercy rule is to be used by state association adoption. If they so choose, it must be 10 runs; it cannot be altered to another run rule, such as 15 runs. Also, coaches and umpires may wear prostheses and use mobility devices while on the field. Wheelchairs, walkers, canes, etc., may be used. These changes are recommended to require that baseball rules conform to ADA requirements. Also in the 2002 season, in order for an umpire to call a runner out for missing a base, the defensive team must execute a proper appeal. The defense may appeal during a live ball, by a coach or any defensive player, immediately following playing action and before a pitch, legal or illegal. A dead ball appeal may be made by a coach or a defensive player with or without the ball by verbally stating that the runner missed the base or left too soon.

*By Kyle McNeeley*

### Former ABUA President Heads 2002 List of Hall of Fame Inductees

The ABUA has announced its list of 2002 Hall of Fame Inductees. Heading the list is former NCAA umpire and past ABUA President, **Dick Runchey** from Plymouth, MI. Kenny Eldridge, current ABUA President called Runchey’s selection a tribute to a man who has given everything to amateur baseball. “I can’t think of anyone more deserving of this honor,” Eldridge said. Joining Runchey at this year’s induction will be four other giants in the world of amateur baseball umpiring. **Al Alford** from

McKinney, TX, graced the field for over 30 years devoting his service to some of the best high school baseball in Texas. Kitty Hawk, NC, sight of our country’s first flight, is also the home of Hall of Fame inductee **Al Forman**, considered an NCAA icon. An Italian Stallion, **Riccardo Fraccarri** from Italy, has been a mainstay at international events all over the world. **Brad Rumble** of Gladstone, MO, spent over 20 years as the key baseball rules and umpiring administrator at the NFHS.

All five selectees will be inducted Saturday January 12, 2002, at the ABUA’s annual banquet in Dallas.

This year’s event at the DFW Airport Marriott is part of a fun-filled NCAA weekend for umpires, families and friends. Anyone interested in attending this year’s festivities can fill out the banquet form (see insert) along with \$50 per ticket.

On-line registration is also available at or [www.umpire.org](http://www.umpire.org).

#### ABUA CHANGES ADDRESS

Effective November 1, 2001, please direct all ABUA correspondence to:  
 ABUA  
 c/o Sports Association Management  
 810 Baltimore, Suite 200  
 Kansas City, MO 64105

## "Reaching Out To Those In Need"

*The ABUA's Executive Director devotes this quarter's Right Call message to the September 11 tragedies. He encourages a positive, forward direction for ABUA members, umpires and all officials.*

Since the tragic events of September 11, I imagine all of us have spent a fair amount of time thinking about the world we now live in and praying for the victims and their families. I'm sure a lot of us also have taken time to assess our own views on what is really important in our lives.

For me it's been important to not only surround myself with family and friends, but to let them know how important they are in my life. Recently my wife delivered our fourth child, a healthy, precious little girl. I can't think of anything in life that keeps you more focused on what is really important in life than the birth of a child. I imagine losing a loved one or friend in this type

of tragedy comes pretty close at the opposite end of the spectrum.

As we watch the heroic rescue and recovery efforts from up close and afar, it's easy to swell with pride as so many people reach out to help. Is there anything more American than reaching out to those in need?

With that theme in mind, and with our 2002 membership drive set to kick off, maybe our motto should be "Reaching out to Those in Need." If, as an association, we are to live our mission to improve umpiring at all amateur levels, we need to reach out to those in need and do everything we can to help them improve.

In your own city, find ways to take a leadership role in the development of young umpires. Offer your services to help teach at a clinic for little league umpires in

your area. Develop a mentor program that tracks the development of young umpires and encourages them to persevere through the ranks. A mentor program can have a huge positive impact on young officials. Help leaders and supervisors bring out the very best in their umpires by building on and praising umpires' strengths, not belittling them as a result of their weaknesses. Set high expectations, praise their strengths and watch them grow!

Those are my thoughts as I try to see how the after effects of this tragedy can weave its way – in a positive light – to the ABUA. I'm quite certain the members of this organization can help turn a negative into a positive by reaching out and helping those in need. I think we'd all feel better if that happened. Let's deliver a strike and reach out to those in need.

*By Ted Breidenthal*

## Another Story From the First-Year Umpire

As a first-year umpire, I was surprised on many occasions by how subdued even large crowds were as their teams slugged it out on the field. I found this to be particularly true in slower-paced, low scoring games. It was enjoyable to see crowds sitting back an enjoying the game. Although loathe to be "a showman," but rather nearly invisible in the personality of a game, I decided to take a different approach to how I made my calls

– even obvious ones that required no "selling." You've heard the adage that an umpired is not the game...don't get me wrong...I was trying to put excitement into the game. The players (and play), I felt, would rise with the energy of an enthusiastic crowd. Rather than merely signal the third strike of the fifth batter to the plate, I gave strong oral calls and was slightly more animated in calling

out at home, or anywhere. Basically, all I did was raise my own energy level first, and the fans and players followed my lead. I really enjoyed being on the field; it was a lot of fun...but more important...I felt I was doing it for the players. It made for better games, and people had more fun without really even knowing why. Next year, I will tone it down to reality...but still have fun.

*By Scott Watkins*



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

## USA Baseball Update

### ABUA Umpire's Journey To VeraCruz



*David Rogers, an NCAA 17-year umpire from Houston chronicles his recent trip to VeraCruz, Mexico.*

There are many ways to learn lessons about appreciations in life, but for me nothing was more real than my recent trip to VeraCruz, Mexico, to umpire in the 15-16 year olds AA World Baseball Championships. I was selected as the lone USA umpire and joined umpires from around the world during the recent August 3 - 13, 2001 event. There was nearly one umpire from each participating country and several from the host country Mexico. Participating teams included Australia, Chinese Taipei, Czech Republic, Cuba, Japan, Korea,

Mexico, Russia, South Africa and Venezuela. The whole experience made me appreciate what I have back in the States...the brand of baseball, the skill of your partners, not to mention the surroundings of your home, family and living conditions. Simple things you may never think about are things or situations that the international community doesn't have or isn't familiar with. Even before the unfortunate events of September 11, I had a special feeling of U.S. loyalty while listening to other country's national anthems. It's funny, you hear the National Anthem 50 - 60 times a year-it's part of baseball-but when you start a game that doesn't have our anthem to start with it's kind of weird! I ended up working eight games in the 10-day tournament, five behind the plate. I was not allowed to work the USA, therefore I couldn't officiate the Gold medal game where Team USA defeated Venezuela. I did work first base in the Bronze medal game, where

Australia beat Korea. The trip was an experience I hope to encounter again. Along with the Bronze medal game I worked the plate for Cuba vs. Australia. Australia was probably the second best team in the tournament. Another experience that won't soon be forgotten was not only working but also meeting umpires from around the world. I would just like to thank both the ABUA and USA Baseball for the selection and opportunity to umpire an international tournament. Hopefully this will be a step toward reaching my goal of umpiring the Olympics.

*By David Rogers*

**USA Baseball Notes.** Tucson, AZ was the host of a USA Junior 17-18 year olds Labor Day tournament. Thirty umpires, mostly all ABUA members, worked the tournament involving 16 teams from around the world.

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