



WBSC MEN'S WORLD SOFTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Whitehorse Yukon, Canada July 2017





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I have great pleasure in presenting a report for my appointment to the fifteenth Men's World Softball Championships in Whitehorse, Canada – July 7th – 16th 2017.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the following people and organisations for their assistance and support.

- Softball New Zealand, in particular Eugene Gilbert
- North Harbour Softball
- The National Umpire Staff
- Scott McLaren – BC Softball Umpires
- Bob Stanton, Wayne Saunders and Brian Van Os
- My employer, the ANZ Bank
- The WBSC umpiring Crew
- Yukon Softball and their volunteers especially Bill Waterhouse
- Tony Kaiaruna "TK"
- The players and fans who attended the tournament
- My wife Karen who allows me to take these great opportunities



TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS, ACCOMMODATION & TRANSPORT

Due to some conflicting travel arrangements and dates etc. it was not possible for TK and me to fly to Canada together. Fortunately however we were able to arrive within an hour or so of each other. We were spending the first few days of our tour in Vancouver to attend the Bob Law Memorial Challenge at South Hill. Participants included the Black Sox, Canada the USA and Gt. Britain so the level was very high, as was the group of umpires attending, several of whom were also going to Whitehorse. Transport and accommodation for this was to be at our own cost but the locals picked us up and we stayed at Scott McLaren's brother's house for that period. They also kindly put us up at a hotel on the final night near the airport.

When going to championships outside of the NZ season I am of the opinion that it is critical to attend a tournament of this standard to ensure you are well prepared for first pitch at the worlds

Interestingly I played at South Hill in 1988 so the venue brought back some memories and I was able to catch up with some of the guys on the team I played on back then.

We flew from Vancouver to Whitehorse on the 4th of July, one day before we were required to arrive. The additional night's accommodation was at our cost. Fortunately we were able to stay at the same hotel as we would be for the remainder of the tournament. As is the standard practice we only had one large bag and one small bag allocated on the internal flight from Vancouver to Whitehorse so we did need to pay excess baggage for this leg for our equipment bag.

Accommodation at the Edgewater Hotel in Whitehorse was very good with reasonable sized rooms for two and a good size meeting room available. The hotel was about 10 minutes' drive to the park and was well situated for restaurants, food outlets etc. There was no local arrangement for laundry. We needed to do our own. Fortunately laundry facilities were available at a sister hotel about four blocks away.

Transport was provided by the hire of five vehicles. This was adequate but did mean that you needed to make arrangements each day with a driver to align with your allocations. The drivers were the North Americans on the crew. It also generally meant that once you were at the park you tended to stay at the park.

Whilst there was a local liaison officer appointed, unlike previous tournaments I have attended, much of the local organisation was done by ourselves e.g. grazing food at the park, refreshments etc. for our nightly meetings. Evening meals were usually done on an ad hoc basis as time allowed.

THE UMPIRE CREW

The umpire crew was originally to be 23 however two umpires pulled out late and one had passport issues that could not be resolved so he did not arrive. Three other umpires, for



various reasons did not arrive until after the tournament had started, placing some additional pressure on those that were there. Ultimately the crew consisted of:

- Jason Carter - AUS
- Jiri Dostal – CZE
- Endon Nobuhiro – JPN
- Leigh Evans – AUS
- Carlos Falcon – VEN
- Daryl Helmer – CAN
- Tony Kaiaruna – NZL
- Peter Kluszczynski – CAN
- Vladimir Liss – CZE
- William Lopez – PUR
- Abel Mataboge – BOT
- Ashley Mmakola – RSA
- Mike Morrissey – CAN
- Enrique Ramirez – CUB
- Gary Skjerven – CAN
- Galip Soenmez – DEU
- Brian Sonak – USA
- Toyomatsu Tabinuki – JPN
- Casey Waite – USA
- Mark Porteous – NZL

The chief umpire was Bob Stanton – CAN, supported by Wayne Saunders – NZL & Brian Van Os – CAN

As is usual there are a number of language issues that occur but by pulling together and using the available resources such as Google Translate, we were able to ensure our non-English speaking members were fully informed and included.

The crew facilities at the park were very good, handy to both diamonds and with a reasonable amount of space when changing. It was lacking in a good area for food preparation but that was minor. During the first couple of days we were in need of a fan due to the heat but that took a 180° degree turn after those first days.

I participated in 22 games. Plate (4), U1 (4), U2 (5), U3 (3), Sub (3), Clock (3)

BRIEF OVERVIEW

The tournament was held at the Pepsi Softball Centre in Whitehorse, Canada. This was, I believe, the fourth world event that the city has hosted and you could not fault the overall organisation. However given its relative remote location crowds were well down on previous



events. Weather also became a factor during the course of the tournament but the grounds crew did a great job getting the diamonds back in to shape once the rain had stopped. There were two games that needed to be suspended and rescheduled for early starts the following day. With 18 hours of daylight in Whitehorse the diamonds have no lights. Both diamonds were of very good quality and played reasonably straight forward so there were no significant additional ground rules to deal with.

There were two sections of eight teams with the top four teams from each section progressing to the Championship Round with the bottom eight playing in the Placement Round. Due to unforeseen travel issues Venezuela did not make it to their first game meaning a forfeit to Japan which proved costly. Two teams, India & Turkey were making their debut at a world event and Hong Kong were returning after a long absence. It is fair to say that the standard of these teams was well below expectations but in all cases the experience will benefit their respective programmes. It was very pleasing to see that after the Black Sox had beaten Turkey comfortably in their first game, all of the team stayed behind and ran a 45 minute coaching clinic for the Turkish players. The response on social media for this action was hugely positive.

As is usual for these events, Bob Stanton encourages early communication with a pre-tournament case play challenge as well as a recognition quiz. The case play this time was a particularly good one involving a temporary runner, missed base, fourth out appeal and a time clock violation.

In addition it was necessary for each umpire to complete a fitness test prior to attending the tournament. This consisted of a Chair Stand, 27 Meter Sprint and a 'T' Test. Minimum standards were expected (I passed).

After the usual technical meeting, bat checks, coin flips etc. Bob updated us on expectations with the key message being that of communication. He highlighted the need to get together on field as a crew to try and sort matters out quickly and efficiently with the priority being to get the call right. That also meant that if necessary we could seek advice from one of the supervisors watching each game. This came in to action on a game that I was on where our ruling was being questioned. By taking the discussion to the supervisor it was confirmed to the coach that in fact our ruling on the play was correct and avoided an unnecessary protest. Prior to the games Bob had sent us that latest update for four man mechanics. The experience of the crew meant that there was very little issue with mechanics. Bob did emphasise the need to utilise FEET. Overall any arguments regarding decisions that occurred were simply on judgment not mechanics or rules. Pitching was of some concern with the back foot being the main culprit. This issue arises due to the hole being dug behind the plate by some pitchers making it virtually impossible for an umpire to verify contact with the rubber. I am aware that further discussion on an international level is likely on the issue. It should be noted that both TK and I were consistent in the calling of this violation.



TWENTY SECOND CLOCK

The twenty second clock was in use for all games and all teams and umpires were provided with the protocols (appendix 1). At this tournament the control of the clock was allocated to one of the crew which had the effect of ensuring the protocols were followed. There was very little issue with the clock and very few violations called. The pitchers were well aware of the need to commence the pitch before the expiration of the time. There remains some uncertainty with the batters as to when and if they were allowed to call time and with this uncertainty most did not i.e. they stayed in the box. There was the occasional blip when the clock was reset rather than restarted and I was on a game where I had “stopped” the clock for the batter but when I restarted it my colleague had reset it. We simply ran the clock back to the position it was at when time was called without further argument. I would suggest that the number of violations called could be counted on two hands and generally the impact of the clock was a considerable time saver.

OFF FIELD UMPIRE

Apart from day one where the crew was incomplete we once again used the off field umpire for the making of substitutions etc. including the correct use of the Temporary Runner (appendix 2).

The off field umpire sat behind the backstop and would endeavour to move towards the coach when it was evident that a change was needed to be made. They would then relay the information to the statisticians and announcers. Initially these changes were ‘yelled’ up to the press box but there was often a communication problem, be it language, accent or other noise going on. Subsequently a ‘runner’ from the press box would come down to take the changes from the off field umpire. This did not delay the game in any way but serves to indicate that not all fields are well set up to utilise this protocol. Overall though it does have a small positive impact on the length of game and it could be extended locally where numbers allow.

Summary

This was a well-run tournament and of course highlighted by the fact that the Black Sox won their seventh World Championships. The weather was a factor. We experienced some very warm weather at the start, some rain at times and on other occasions weather so cold that umpires were wearing jackets and gloves! Whilst I have no complaints I do not think that the umpire crew received the recognition and local support that they deserved. We basically had to look after ourselves throughout the tournament although we did that well. For example upon receipt of our uniform trousers it was necessary for each individual to have them hemmed. The crew itself was great with many new friendships and further extension of the umpiring Whanau created. Likeminded people tend to enjoy each other’s company. The “chiefs” did a great job with their mentorship and allocations and I thank them for that.



Mark Porteous

PHOTOS



Uniform Allocation

Gift exchange booty



Coin Flips

Pepsi Softball Centre



View from the umpire's room

NZ represents!



Umpire's Room

World's shortest Umpire Crew!



Final Crew

Black Sox v Australia

