



## **AN UMPIRES ROAD TO THE OLYMPICS**

*by Merle Butler ISF Umpire-In-Chief and a member of the ISF Hall of Fame.*

**Many umpires around the world dream of umpiring in the Olympics.** I often get asked the question, "What can I do to be selected as an Olympic Umpire?" Let's take a look at the basic requirements. This may "jump start" each umpire interested in becoming an Olympic umpire, **so they may prepare for 2008 or beyond.**

**Start with setting achievable goals on a regular basis.** When an umpire first enters the ranks of officiating, he/she should establish a goal to be the best that he or she can be. The goals must be attainable and when they are reached, establish new ones. This means to attend as many schools and rules clinics as are available and to practice what has been taught.

Admittedly this will take time from your family and they must be aware and accept these hardships before you begin your career as an umpire. When not assigned to games, you should be observing veteran umpires and their style, techniques, positioning, and mechanics. Copy what you feel you can do, and develop a style suitable for yourself. What may work for one umpire may not work for another. Be aware of that when you try to copy someone's style. Take game management for one. If someone's style to control players and managers isn't working, try other approaches until you find one that will work for you.

**Ask questions!** If you are fairly new to umpiring and you have a question on a call that you made, or the position you were in to make a certain call felt uncomfortable, either ask your partner after the game, or call your association training officer and seek an answer. The umpire who gets ahead will be the one who corrects his/her errors immediately. If you do not, when a similar play occurs in another game, if it was called wrong the first time, it will be called wrong the next time as well. If you had missed an interpretation, and are corrected, you will never miss that rule application again.

**Your first few years will be work and more work** - umpiring, observing, asking questions, taking criticism, and continuing to improve. There may be disappointments and rejections along the way. I have seen some very good umpires drop their officiating career because they did not receive an assignment they were looking for, or received a critical evaluation for a game performance. You will learn from these disappointments. The main difference between an umpire who reaches the top and those that remain average is their ability to handle disappointments, overcome obstacles, and keep their sights on their goals.



I have heard my good friend Henry Pollard make this statement at various clinics we have shared, "**A winner says, it may be difficult, but it's possible. A loser says, it may be possible, but it's too difficult.**" Nothing is too difficult if you want it bad enough, and believe me, to be an Olympic umpire is more important to an umpire, if he or she has had to overcome some obstacles along the way.

Become known in your association, in your state, in your country, in your region and finally at the world level. How do you become known? By following the outline shown above. **Work on your mechanics, your positioning, your attitude, your signals, and your game management.** Being the best you can be at each level will be noticed, and soon you will achieve a higher level. Again, establishing goals at each level will help you reach the top quicker. Admittedly you may feel you are better than someone who was selected ahead of you, but that alone should give you the incentive to work harder in the future. Do not downgrade your fellow umpire. Only work harder to achieve and this will help you succeed.

**Twelve umpires have achieved** this level and I would like to congratulate each one of them at this time. Each of the six ISF Regions was recognized in the 2004 selections for Athens. The appointments include six female and six male umpires. There will also be three alternate umpires in the event that any from the initial selection become unavailable.

*"Mr. Butler, who at various ISF events including World Championships, World Cups, regional games, and other major international competitions, has observed all the umpires nominated, said, "I feel we have provided to the ISF the very best umpires available, who have extensive experience at the international level."*



**Those chosen are as follows:**

Back row : Merle Butler (USA), Wayne Saunders (New Zealand), Santos Vasquez (Puerto Rico), Neville Lawrence (Australia), Pavel Vychodsky (Czech Republic), Yang Yi (China), Vincent Maoeng (South Africa), Henry Pollard (USA). Front row: Leanna Pacini (Canada), Debbi Lauderback (USA), Leilani Okuda (USA), Kelly Hunter (Canada), Marty Makar (USA), Haruhi Goto (Japan)

**Alternates :**

Augustine Brea (Dominican Republic), Weng-Meng LIN (Chinese Taipei), Nicola Ogier (New Zealand))

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