



## SOFTBALL AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

*Gilley's Shield Round 2 Waverley, VIC  
Friday 11 December – Sunday 13  
December 2009*

**Report - Mark Porteous**



I was fortunate enough to be chosen to represent and officiate at the second round of the Gilley's Shield held in Waverly, near Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

I travelled with the Auckland and Wellington based White Sox players from Auckland arriving in Melbourne on Thursday the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, We met up with the Canterbury based players in Melbourne. We arrived to torrential rain which did not auger well for the weekend. However our concerns were short lived.

My accommodation for the weekend was booked and paid for by New Zealand so that meant staying with the team at the Best Western in Wheeler's Hill. The accommodation was very good and handy to the park and local amenities but I believe that it is important for future trips that the travelling umpire be accommodated with the rest of the umpiring crew. Transport to and from the ground (about 2km's away) was provided by one of the local umpires for which I was very grateful. It would not have been practical to travel to and from the park with the team.

I was invited to a special breakfast held by the White Sox on the first morning where two new players were presented their playing shirts by former White Sox player Nic Pouaka. She gave them, and me, some insight in to what it means to represent your country, how hard you need to work at your craft and whatever you do "always do your best and never slacken off".

This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the Gilley's Shield and it was being hosted by the [Waverley Softball Association](#). The park and its facilities were very good and the fact that it was essentially a women's only facility meant that the fences were set at the correct distance which meant a number of home-runs were hit. I believe that more facilities in New Zealand should also be set up to allow for the women's only game even if that means temporary fences.

The day had cleared nicely after the rain from yesterday so after arriving and meeting my fellow crew members, crew chief Debbie Grove and going over a couple of ground rules and technical matters I prepared for my first game between two very evenly matched teams. It was an excellent game and I was surprised at the level of intensity between the teams but also the respect that all of the players and coaching staff had for the game. The speed of the game was also noticeable with no mucking around. Changes are made promptly and when there is a need to change a runner (the two out catcher rule was mandatory) the runner was always ready to go. I had three games on the Friday with some umpires commenting that that was unusual. They were somewhat surprised when I told them three was usually the minimum at a New Zealand tournament. The last game of the day was between the home team Victoria and New Zealand. The game drew a reasonable crowd with many familiar faces in the crowd all ex pats now living in Melbourne. I was U3 on that game in very pleasant conditions. Again it was a well played game with only a run in it.

After the games all of the crew went out to dinner at a local establishment where we discussed the happenings of the day and talked about many situations, plays and tournaments that we had all attended. It was great evening.

I had a late start on Saturday (noon) and only the two games to do. So with a reasonable break before my next game I was fortunate enough to be provided with some feedback from both Debbie Grove (UIC) and Leigh Evans. Both of these umpires have a wealth of experience and their words to me were forthright and insightful. Afterward Leigh also took me out on to a spare diamond and we discussed three man mechanics and the starting locations in some depth. This advice has resonated and I immediately put it into practice. This sort of feedback was invaluable and I really appreciated the effort both Debbie and Leigh had made to improve my performance.

I had my first plate game on Saturday evening; again it was the local team against Queensland. The game had been delayed due to the induction of the Victorian Assistant coach and Olympian Peta Edebone in to the Australian Softball Hall of Fame. So there was a good crowd on hand and again there was only the one run in it with a first inning home run allowing the home team to take the game.

The crew then headed out to dinner and I presented all of the participating umpires with a badge and a small gift from New Zealand to Debbie for all of her fantastic work.

I had an early start on Sunday morning with the 9am game between ACT and NSW. Both teams were in good form and despite the early hour and conditions less than desirable the game was tight and tense. My final game was between NZ and WA. The highlight of this game was seeing two great former Black Sox players in the coach's box. Dean Rice for New Zealand and Kere Johansen for WA.

After the game I had another briefing from Debbie and then I joined the White Sox team for a quick barbecue before packing up my gear and retuning to the airport for our flight home.

The tournament was a fantastic experience and I learned a lot in a short space of time. The crew members were all very welcoming and friendly and were always willing to share their thoughts and insights with me. Something I did notice is that the Australian Umpires did seem to share their opinion on "specific" judgement plays more readily than we do here. I found all the teams to be very friendly and respectful at all times with the worst I got being a furtive glance rather than rant from any player or coach.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following:

- Alison Boys for organising my air travel and accommodation
- The North Harbour Softball Association for providing me with souvenir badges

- The White Sox management team especially Lynn Lockhart, Vicky Griffiths & Kathy McGilbert for transporting and occasionally feeding me
- Phil Waller for driving me to and from the ground
- Dianne Waller for doing my laundry (note to self, make sure the person doing your laundry knows what time your 1<sup>st</sup> game is the following morning!)
- The Waverly Softball Association and especially
- Debbie Grove and the umpiring crew for their assistance, friendliness and feedback throughout the tournament

### Games

Team 1	Team 2	Plate	U1	U3
<i>Day One</i>				
Queensland	ACT	Kevin Broomhall	Ian Frame	Mark Porteous
Victoria	NSW	David Casey	Mark Porteous	Ian Frame
Victoria	New Zealand	Yvonne Kahler	Leigh Evans	Mark Porteous
<i>Day Two</i>				
South Australia	ACT	Trevor Murphy	Mark Porteous	Yvonne Kahler
Victoria	Queensland	Mark Porteous	Jason Carter	Kevin Broomhall
<i>Day Three</i>				
ACT	NSW	Mark Porteous	Ian Frame	Debbie Keogh
West Australia	New Zealand	Kevin Broomhall	Deb Keogh	Mark Porteous

Plate	U1	U3
Two Games	Two Games	Three Games

ACT	NSW	NZ	SA	QLD	VIC	WA
Three	Two	Two	One	Two	Three	One



Mark Porteous