



Olympic Qualifier Europe Africa and Canada Cup 2003

UMPIRE'S REPORT – by Wayne Saunders

Appreciation

I thank the International Softball Federation through Vice President Bob Leveloff for my appointment to the Olympic Qualifying Tournament Europe Africa in Macerata and Cupramontana, Italy. To be assigned to and assessed for Olympic Game selection at such an important tournament is indeed an honour. To Softball New Zealand, and in particular National Director of Umpiring Bill Smith, thank you for facilitating the opportunity to work at the Canada Cup on my return journey home. It has and continues to be an honour to represent Softball New Zealand at the International level of our sport. To staff at Softball New Zealand, thank you for your assistance with those many items that require attention before departure.

I would also like to record my thanks to my employer Sinclair Knight Merz who have continued to assist me throughout my umpiring career. Without their support I would not be able to commit the time required.

Travel Arrangements

On the recommendation of Softball New Zealand travel details were personally arranged through Air New Zealand. SARS, the Iraqi conflict, scheduling warm-up games and a restrictive baggage allowance (if traveling via Asia) influenced the final route selection and bookings. Unfortunately confirmation of flights to London had to be made prior to the confirmation of any warm-up games. The arrangement of warm-up games was a protracted exercise, with final confirmation of games in Italy.

I was fortunate to have my wife accompany me. Our outward leg started at 6.30pm Wednesday 11 June via Auckland, Los Angeles, Vancouver, London, Rome, and Ancona with an overnight layover in LA. We were advised by Air NZ to check our luggage in at LA through to Ancona to avoid paying excess baggage that they had overlooked, when ticketing our European flights. We arrived Ancona late, due to flight delays, at 12.30am Saturday 14 June minus our entire checked luggage. We were met at Ancona airport by Mario Crescimbeni, Consigliere Federale of the Federation of Italian Baseball and Softball and kindly driven to our Hotel one hour away in Macerata.

Our outward legs were less arduous. We stopped over in Rome for three days before departing 8.10am Thursday 3 July to Vancouver via London. Arrived Vancouver at 3.30pm where we were met by Umpire Liaison, Byron Jones, and driven to our Hotel.

Following the Canada Cup we spent four days in Victoria, Vancouver Island as guests of umpiring friends Heather and Keith Hazel. Our homeward leg was Vancouver, LA arriving New Zealand Saturday 19 July.



Olympic Qualifier Europe Africa Macerata/Cupramontana, Italy

Pre-tournament

Arrangements had been made for me to assist umpiring two games in the Italian National League. These games were between the local team Macerata and Bollate and played in the cooler temperatures of Saturday evening. Two Italian International umpires, Giuseppe Laudani and Antonella Garofalo drove up from Rome for the game. With my umpiring gear in our luggage somewhere between LA and Rome, I was decked out in a smart looking Italian umpiring uniform. Post game it was off for a traditional Italian late evening meal with the blues before they headed back to Rome some two and a half driving time away.

Whilst waiting for our luggage to turn-up we spent the next three days in Macerata acclimatizing to the mid thirty degree daytime temperatures. This was followed by a very pleasant two days of cultural immersion in Florence before returning to Macerata for the Qualifier.

Pre-tournament Umpire Clinic

Henry Pollard (TCU) conducted this clinic with the assistance of René Sterkenburg (DCU). Don Porter, Clovis Lodewijks and Andy Loechner also attended and each addressed the meeting.

Meeting notes:

- ❑ Only ISF approved bats could be used.
- ❑ ISF rules including the mercy rule of 7 runs ahead after five inning and the notified intentional walk were used.
- ❑ Umpires were encouraged to ensure a minimum of time wasting was achieved.
- ❑ All bats and helmet were to be checked before the start of **EVERY** game. A list of the approved bats was available at each diamond.
- ❑ The four umpire mechanics to be used were the current ISF mechanics as implemented in New Zealand. A copy of these mechanics was available to all umpires via the ESF umpires webpage prior to the tournament.

Venue

The main field in Macerata was a five minute walk from our Hotel, while the second field was at a separate venue in Cupramontana one hour's drive away. Both these venues had a softball and baseball diamond as part of the complex. Separate changing facilities were provided for male and female umpires. Transport to and from Cupramontana was provided. Good meals were provided free of charge at each ballpark. The Italians were very pleasant people and tremendous hosts.

Field Mechanics

It was a pleasure to be at a tournament where all umpires were familiar with the "one" system of four umpire mechanics to be used. In my report from South Africa 2000 I mentioned the need to issue in writing the mechanics to be used before the start of a tournament. However

this still did not ensure that these mechanics were properly implemented. In fact, as could be expected, there was plenty of room for improvement in application, particularly at the start of the tournament. These mechanics need to be used more frequently prior to world tournaments before the desired level of implementation is achieved. This should be an important consideration in the preparation of our New Zealand umpires for world events.

Outfitting

Muzuno were again the generous sponsors of the umpires and we were outfitted with two field shirts, a pair of trousers and cap.

Umpires

There were 16 field umpires assigned by the ISF. They were from Italy (Giuseppe Laudani, Antonella Garofalo, Gianluca Magnani), The Netherlands (Bob Krijnen, Carolien Loggen), The Czech Republic (Pavel Vychodsky, Miroslav Dolejs), Germany (Frank Wagner, Axel Vogel), USA (Jo Massaro), Canada (Nancy Morrison), Sweden (José Sanchez), Russia (Oleg Shelpov), Croatia (Bob Milosavljevic) and South Africa (Vincent Maong). "The Crew" was a pleasant mix of experience and one of the most integrated and friendliest I have worked on.

Four umpire mechanics were used throughout the tournament with six umpires used on the final two games. Umpires were mainly assigned to two games a day at one or the other ballpark. It was a nine o'clock start for the trip to Cupramontana and a post midnight return. The day temperatures were in the mid thirties and my pre-tournament acclimatization to these temperatures proved invaluable.

The quality of softball varied between the twelve teams but in general most games were competitive. With their pitching staff Italy was the standout team, while The Czech Republic and The Netherlands were the next best.

Game Assignments for the record.

	Italian National League	
Game 1	Macerata (2) v Bollate (0)	1 st Base
Game 2	Macerata (10) v Bollate (0)	3 rd Base
	Olympic Qualifying Tournament Europe Africa	
Game 3	Belgium (3) v Croatia (0)	Plate
Game 7	Czech Republic (8) v Belgium (0)	3 rd Base
Game 12	Croatia (0) v Netherlands (22)	2 nd Base
Game 16	Czech Republic (5) v Netherlands (0)	1 st Base
Game 20	Germany (5) v Croatia (1)	Plate
Game 24	Italy (7) v Russia (0)	3 rd Base
Game 25	Netherlands (7) v Belgium (0)	1 st Base
Game 29	Spain (0) v Italy (5)	Plate
Playoffs		
Game 33	Netherlands (0) v Italy (1)	3 rd Base
Game 37	Czech Republic (0) v Italy (7)	2 nd Base
Game 40	Czech Republic (2) v Italy (9) Grand Final	Plate
Grand Final	Saunders (Plate), Morrison (1 st Base), Milosavljevic (2 nd Base),	
Crew	Massaro (3 rd Base), Shelpov (LF), Sanchez (RF)	

Canada Cup 2003 – Vancouver, Canada

Pre-tournament Umpire Clinic

Mike Hornack (TCU-CC) conducted this clinic with the assistance of members from the CC tournament committee. Brian Van Os and Keith Hazel assisted Mike as joint TCU's of the Futures.

A very detailed umpires information package was received prior to the tournament covering rules and administration matters. ISF rules were used with only minor changes. Umpires were instructed that bats and helmets must be checked before the start of all games. A list of bats approved by the ISF was available.

Venue

Softball City, Surrey was the venue, a well-laid out four-diamond softball complex that was part of a larger sports facility area. The umpires were housed in the changing rooms of the Ice Hockey Stadium adjacent to the ballpark. Separate facilities were provided for male and female umpires. Transport was provided to and from the visiting umpires hotel accommodation a half an hour away from the ballpark. Umpires provided for their own meals, drinks and accommodation.

Field Mechanics

Three umpire mechanics were used for pool play and the earlier playoff games. In the main the mechanics used were the same as used in New Zealand with the exception of flyball coverage. There was a reluctance to go out on simple flyballs or sometimes on flyballs when runners were on base. The judgment on whether to go or not differed between umpires and resulted in inconsistencies in application. In my opinion the ISF mechanics as adopted by New Zealand provides for greater consistence in application.

Four umpire mechanics were used in the final series of games. At first there seemed to be a reluctance to use the ISF approved mechanics. It was explained that in the main these are less complicated and relied on the rotation of the third base umpire. As these mechanics had not been well practiced, application in some cases was not as good as it could have been. In my opinion a tournament of this International standing should be using the Internationally accepted mechanics and would benefit from the use of four-umpire mechanic throughout the tournament.

Umpires

There were thirteen umpires assigned to the Canada Cup and over thirty more to the Special Olympics and Futures divisions. The crew was a good balance of experience and youth. There were five females and eight males with eight of the crew ISF certified. The Canada Cup is very popular amongst umpires with many applications to attend received. The tournament assigners have a difficult selection task having to cater for local senior umpires, promising up and coming local umpires, umpires appointed by Softball Canada, USA umpires and visiting overseas umpires with the International teams attending this tournament. Considering all the foresaid I thank Mike Hornack for extending an invitation for me to attend.

While at the tournament Bill Smith had asked that I advance discussions on the proposed umpire exchange programme with British Columbia. I spoke at some length with Mike Hornack the provincial chief umpire. The New Zealand viewpoint was very well received and these discussions have been minuted and forwarded to Mike and Bill for further consideration.

Cheryl Simmons from California was again in attendance. The CA and BC umpires inter exchange for selected tournaments in a similar way to what happens here in NZ. Cheryl was very interested in the exchange programme proposed with the BC umpires. She thought that this type of exchange could well work between NZ and CA where women's umpiring is quite strong. Cheryl was in New Zealand in 1995 for the Olympic Qualifier and also attended our first gender equity seminar and could see mutual benefits in an exchange programme. These discussions have been minuted and forwarded to Cheryl and Bill for further consideration.

Game Assignments for the record.

Canada Cup 2003

CC-2	Triple Crown Force (0) v Schutt Hurricanes (7)	3 rd Base
CC-5	China (0) v USA National (8)	Plate
CC-14	Philippines (4) v Illinois Elite Force (5)	1 st Base
CC-19	NJCAA (0) v USA National (9)	Plate
CC-24	China (11) v Illinois Elite Force (0)	1 st Base
CC-28	USA Elite (6) v Schutt Hurricanes (0)	3 rd Base
CC-31	Schutt Hurricanes (5) v White Rock Renegades (1)	3 rd Base
CC-39	Chinese Taipei (1) v Triple Crown Force (0)	Plate
CC-44	Australia (11) v Triple Crown Force (6)	1 st Base
CC-48	Chinese Taipei (3) v Teamsmith Nationals (2)	Plate
CC-52	Australia (4) v White Rock Renegades (0)	1 st Base
Playoffs		
CCP-4 (3)	Canada (3) v Schutt Hurricanes (2)	3 rd Base
CCP-8 (4)	USA Elite (9) v Canada (2)	3 rd Base
CCP-12 (4)	Australia (2) v USA Elite (1)	3 rd Base
CCP-14 (4)	Australia (0) v USA Elite (2)	1 st Base
Final	Crew: Henning, Saunders, Shipley, Troelsen	

Recommendations and concluding remarks

- 1) The approved 3 and 4 umpire mechanics be uploaded to the ISF umpire webpage. It is more appropriate that all approved international mechanics and case plays be available from the ISF website. This should ensure that the latest information is available to all.
- 2) SNZ investigate with ISF the reason why helmet and bat checks are now required before all games. This could influence a change in the current SNZ policy of only one check at the being of a tournament. SNZ inform its members on the outcome of this investigation.
- 3) NZ umpires undertake appropriate field training in the use of the ISF approved four umpire mechanics prior to major events were these mechanics would be used.
- 4) SNZ review its policy on the level of support and assistance given to its' umpires traveling overseas on approved assignments.

Yours sincerely,
Wayne Saunders.