



BCBUA Anniversary Celebrations

"To commemorate the 35th anniversary of the BCBUA, organizers are planning to hold a celebration on Saturday November 21 as part of the Annual General Meeting weekend in Victoria. Long time members will be honoured, includ-

ing the original members who are still with us. Most of our Past Presidents will be in attendance for this special occasion as we celebrate 35 years as an association.

If you have any old memorabilia of note, photographs in

particular, we encourage you to loan them to us for a display that will be set up in the banquet room.

Contact Steve Boutang if you have anything you wish to include as part of our celebration.

FUN Facts!

You have all heard baseball announcer's use of the phrase, the Dog Days of Summer..... but what does it mean?

As you will read, it has nothing to do with baseball.

The term "Dog Days" was used by the Greeks (see, e.g., Aristotle's Physics, 199a2), as well as the ancient Romans (who called these days *caniculares dies* (days of the dogs)) after Sirius (the "Dog Star", in Latin *Canicula*), the brightest star in the heavens besides the sun. The dog days of summer are also called canicular days.

The Dog Days originally were the days when Sirius, the Dog Star, rose just before or at the

same time as sunrise (heliacal rising), which is no longer true, owing to precession of the equinoxes. The ancients sacrificed a brown dog at the beginning of the Dog Days to appease the rage of Sirius, believing that the star was the cause of the hot, sultry weather.

Dog Days were popularly believed to be an evil time "when the seas boiled, wine turned sour, dogs grew mad, and all creatures became languid, causing to man burning fevers, hysterics, and phrensies" according to Brady's *Clavis Calendarium*, 1813.

In Ancient Rome, the Dog Days extended from July 24 through August 24 (or, alternatively July

23-August 23). In many European cultures (German, French, Italian) this is still the period to be the time of the Dog Days.

The Old Farmer's Almanac lists the traditional timing of the Dog Days as the 40 days beginning July 3 and ending August 11, coinciding with the ancient heliacal (at sunrise) rising of the Dog Star, Sirius. These are the days of the year when rainfall is at its lowest levels.

Dog Days can also define a time period or event that is very hot or stagnant, or marked by dull lack of progress.....- Now that represents some baseball games I've been at!

World Baseball Challenge

Team USA's National Collegiate club won the recently concluded 6 team World Baseball Challenge in Prince George defeating Germany 8-1 in the final. BCBUA members Steve

Boutang, Rob Allan, Nick Moore, and Kris Hartley were part of the regular 6 man infield umpire crew for the week long event. Congratulations to Rob Allan who worked the final at

home plate. Line umpires for the 9 day event were: Lance Brommeland (co-ordinator), Andre Jean, Terry Shaw, and Sean Hardiman.

Calendar of Events:

- August 6-9 Baseball Canada Jr. Championships – Trois Rivieres, PQ
- August 6-9 Baseball Canada Cup – Kindersley, SK
- August 13-16 Baseball Canada Midget Championships – Fredericton, NB
- August 20-23 Baseball Canada Peewee Championships – Red Deer, AB
- August 20-23 Baseball Canada Bantam Boys Championships – Vaughan, ON
- August 20-23 Baseball Canada Bantam Girls Championships – Bolton, ON
- August 20-23 Baseball Canada Sr. Men's Championships – Dartmouth, NS
- August 22-30 Canada Summer Games – Charlottetown, PEI
- September 16-20 Jim Wray Memorial Fall Classic – Vancouver, BC
- October 15-18 Baseball Canada Caravan – Edmonton, AB
- November 7-8 Baseball Canada AGM
- November 21 BCBUA 35th Anniversary Celebration – Victoria, BC
- November 22 BCBUA Annual General Meeting – Victoria, BC

AGM announcement confirmed....

BCBUA President John Berry has confirmed that Victoria will host the Annual General Meeting November 22. Organizers are working out details for the site of the event, which was last held in Victoria

in 2006.

The positions of President and Treasurer are up for election, along with a host of Area Representative positions. It is

believed that John Berry will be running for election again. Berry has been President for the past 6 years.

Say What???

This simple explanation of the 'ins' and 'outs' of baseball was provided by BCBUA Area Rep Dennis Windsor of Vernon.

1. The game is played by two teams, one team out & one team in.

The team that's in sends players out, one at a time to see if they can get in before they go out.

If they go out before they get in, the come back in, but it doesn't count.

If they get in before they go out, it

does count.

2. When the team in has three outs, the team that's out comes in and the team that's in goes out to try and get three out before the team that was out gets any in.
3. When both teams have been in and out nine times, the game is over.

The team with the most in without being out before they were in wins. If both teams have the same number in before they were out, the last team in goes out to try and get the other team

out before they get any more in. Then the last team out comes in to try and get more in before they go out.

The game ends when each team has been in the same number of times and one team has more in before they went out.

With a precise explanation like this available, it's hard to imagine why baseball is such a difficult game to teach and officiate and why spectators don't understand.

Stump the Ump Answer from Issue 2

So here is the question from Issue 3 back in May.

With two out and a 3-2 count on the batter, the pitcher pitches the ball. The batter swings at the pitch but is hit in the hands with the ball. The ball rolls out and stops in front of the plate completely in fair territory. The batter stands in the batters box holding his injured hand and makes no attempt to run to first.

Seeing the ball lying in front of the plate, the catcher picks up the ball and tags the batter for what appears is the

3rd out of the inning. However the offensive manager comes out and discusses the play with the home plate umpire. Everyone agrees that the pitched ball did strike the batter in the hands as he was swinging at the pitch, but the ball hit the hands not the bat. The home plate umpire declares that the batter was hit with a pitched ball and sends him to 1st base. Now the defensive manager comes out and says that hands are part of the bat and the batter really should be called out. Who is right? What should this poor umpire do?

Lots of people got this answer right this month. Here is the official ruling. If the batter is struck with the ball while swinging at a 3rd strike, the ball is dead and the batter is called out. All runners shall return to their Time of Pitch base. It does not matter if the pitched ball struck the batter in the hands first in this situation. And the myth that the "hands are part of the bat" is just that, a myth. If you are ever confronted with that statement from a player, coach or manager just ask them when the last time they bought a bat with hands at-

Tip of the Month

(This exert was taken from the Gerry Davis Sports newsletter June 2009)

Plate Stance Specifics – The Scissors

Once Mandatory in the National League, the scissors stance is kind of like the wood bat – very functional if you know how to use it, but not all that popular and rarely seen as the right tool for a new umpire to use to make a great first impression.

Yet umpires who master the scissors know

they get a great look at pitches because their head and eyes are well into the slot and as far forward as any umpire stance will allow.

Head Height – You'll establish and maintain good head height by controlling how far you bend your forward knee. Depending on how tall you are, and the size of players in the game, you might bend that forward leg slightly or as much as 90 degrees. Remember – your minimum head

height places the bottom of your chin just above the top of the catcher's head. When in doubt, work a little higher instead of a bit too low.

Location – Two factors to consider. Be well in the slot, and try to be in relatively the same position for each pitch. Get into the slot by setting up about midway between the catcher's inside shoulder and the

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batter's chest – and keep in mind that this is an approximation. If the batter crowds the plate then you'll have to adjust towards the center of the plate so that his body does not block your view of the pitcher's release point.

You may also have to work higher for a few pitches until they get back into a more regular setup. Try to find a 'spot' and stay there the whole game.

Balance – This is the trickiest part of the scissors. Your lead foot is pointed towards the pitcher and the straight leg should be almost directly behind you toward the back-stop. The back foot should be pointed downwards rather than out to the side. When you think about it, with your feet this way it's like standing on the narrow edge of a 2x4. There is not much stability, which means a lot of umpires have problems getting their balance and feeling comfortable in the scissors stance.

Comfort – There are a couple of keys here, but let's focus on your straight leg and the back. Both really do need to be straight. If

the back leg knee is bent, especially during the pitch, the stance loses a lot of stability. If you bend before the pitch, it will change later in the game because you will be tired. So straight leg – and a very straight back. You are essentially drawing a straight line from the ankle to the shoulder blade. Above all, don't hunch your shoulders forward. By keeping your shoulders back, the neck and spine are far less likely to compress when hit in the facemask with foul balls and the like. This will prevent potential injury.

Lock-In Mechanism – True stability requires a physical element of your plate stance that GUARANTEES your head height. A big advantage of the scissors is a simple, comfortable lock-in mechanism. Simply rest your upper body weight on your front knee by placing one or both hands on that knee. Keep your elbows straight and tucked close to the ribs (so as not to be exposed to foul balls). As soon as you determine how you want to place your hands you'll be VERY stable and comfortable.

A good scissors umpire gets into his stance by 'stepping back'. Place your lead foot first, adjacent to the catcher. When you see the pitcher ready to commit to pitching, drop

into your stance by keeping the lead foot in place and stepping back with your back leg. You'll also want to step back to get out of your stance. Push off that lead foot and stand up on your back leg.

One final aspect – if you locate well with the scissors your face will be almost even with the side of the catcher's ear. That's closer to the pitcher than any other stance allows. It will give you an unmatched look at the critical outside corner of the strike zone. This is the biggest reason scissors umpires like their look at the strike zone.

If you're tempted, try the scissors in your next game. Work out the mechanics at home in front of the mirror. Then commit to at least 2 innings on the field. You may be surprised at how comfortable you can be in the scissors.

Editors note: Neither the BCBUA or Baseball Canada teach the scissor stance. If you choose to use this stance be aware that it may cost you points on your evaluation to the upper levels of baseball officiating since it is not an officially sanctioned stance.

Interview with Corrie Davis *continued from last issue*

Baseball Canada supervisor Corrie Davis was part of the umpire crew at the Major League Baseball World Baseball Classic a few months ago. Editor Steve Boutang sat down with Davis and got his thoughts on a number of topics from the tournament.

S.B. -What was it like to be on the field with the likes of Joe West and other MLB veterans?

C.D. - I got to do a Spring Training game with Joe West... what a great man. It was absolutely surreal to look down from first base and see him working the plate. He was very good to the international umpires, very welcoming, always willing to answer questions. I think that he really understood the magnitude of this experience for an amateur umpire and he went out of his way to make it even more memorable for us.

I also got to work with Hunter Wendelstedt for a couple of Spring Training games. We talked a lot about his pro school and we're trying to work out something so that we can get more Canadians down there.

My WBC crew consisted of MLB umpires

Larry Vanover (our crew chief), Laz Diaz, and Eric Cooper. The other IBAF umpires were Luis Ramirez (Mexico) and Stephane Dupont (another Canadian!). Again, the MLB guys were so good to us... always willing to answer what probably seemed like endless questions, very supportive both on and off the field. I picked up so many tips from watching them work and asking them questions. I was really able to see how hard they work, how they prepare for their games, how difficult it must be for them to work under such intense pressure every day, and how much they love to do what they do. If you encountered them off of the field, you would never know that they were MLB umpires... no egos, no arrogance... just really down-to-earth, regular guys who happen to have rather exceptional jobs. I also saw that they really value their time away from the ball park... something that is directly reflective of the amount of pressure that these guys face on a daily basis.

I will always be grateful for their support and friendship at the WBC.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Larry Young. Larry was the MLB Umpire Supervisor for our bracket and he is an absolutely outstanding man. We worked with him a lot at camp in November and I was really glad to hear that he would be with us in Puerto Rico. He is so knowledgeable, so accommodating to answer endless questions and give responses in a way that is never condescending... really a gentleman. I have tremendous respect for him not only as an umpire and supervisor, but as a person in general. I feel really fortunate that I got a chance to work with him.

S.B. -How important is baseball to Puerto Ricans?

C.D. - I would say that it's very important... similar to how much Canadians value hockey. The crowds were very loud, very enthusiastic, and very knowledgeable about the game. I know that a lot of the Puerto Rican fans were looking forward to at least one game against the Dominican Republic and there was some disappointment when that never materialized. There seems to be a

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Stump the Ump August 2009

Well let's take this stump the ump question area to the next level. This one should make you stop and think a bit.

With 2 outs and runners at 1st and 3rd, the pitcher delivers a quick pitch to the batter who has a 3-2 count. The plate umpire immediately calls a balk on the pitcher verbally, but does not signal the call since the pitch is on its way to the plate. The batter ignores the umpire's call and hits the ball into short center field.

The runner from 3rd breaks for home on the hit as there were 2

outs, but the runner at 1st hearing that the plate umpire had called a balk slowly makes his way to 2nd base.

The batter meanwhile has now realized that the plate umpire called a balk on the pitcher and has remained in his batter's box unaware that the runner from 3rd is coming home. The throw from the center fielder is also on its way to the plate at the same time. Needless to say the batter is run into by his teammate from 3rd just as the ball arrives from the center fielder. The Catcher catches the ball and tries to

make a play on the runner from 3rd who still had not touched the plate due to the collision with the batter. However, the batter is in the way of the catcher making a play on the runner.

The plate umpire seeing the mess at the plate calls time. What is the correct ruling on this play? Where should the umpire place the runners and the batter? What if anything should the umpire have done to avoid this situation in the first place.

Ump's last game included two future baseball stars

By Andy Halford, Special to the Vancouver Sun July 25, 2009

I stumbled on my own favourite memento by mistake.

I was an amateur baseball umpire for many years and like most umpires, I collected game balls from provincial and other important tournaments that I worked. I have a rather large collection of these baseballs, only one of which is now part of my favourite memento.

I retired from umpiring in 1998 and decided two years ago to donate my equipment to an up-and-coming young umpire. As I cleaned out my equipment bag I found the umpire's working copy of the line-up sheet from my final game, on Sept. 13, 1998, the championship game of the Midget Fall Classic. While browsing the home team -- North Delta -- line-up I discovered that the second batter was Jeff Francis and the third hitter was none other than Justin Morneau.

Not many umpires can say that the last amateur game they worked had two future major league stars in the line-up. Justin already has an MVP award and Jeff some day will be a Cy Young award candidate.

Editors Note: I had the privilege of working with Andy several times over his career and was very pleased to have helped celebrate his 50th birthday by awarding him the plate game in Vernon for a BC Provincial Midget Championship. If anyone else has a story like this that they would like to share, drop the editors a note and we will get it into the next edition of Hey Blue On-line!

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huge rivalry there.

S.B. - What would be the single greatest memory of your experience?

C.D. - Wow...tough question...not sure if I could pick just one thing. A few things really stand out:

First of all, I'm really proud of my international counterparts. I think that we felt a lot of pressure to perform well at the WBC because we felt like we were doing our part to show that baseball really is a global game. Dick Runchey (IBAF Supervisor of Umpires) really showed a lot of faith in us by selecting us for this tournament and I really wanted to make sure that I didn't let him down. Dick was with us in Puerto Rico and I'll never forget the look of pride on his face when we finished the last game.

I also feel really proud of our Canadian program. The fact that we were able to send two

umpires to this tournament says a lot about what we do to develop umpires in Canada. Neither Stephane or I have ever gone to pro school...we are products of the Canadian umpire development program (NUCP) and it means a lot to me (maybe even more now that I am the National Supervisor of Umpires) that our program was able to develop to umpires who were deemed capable of working at a tournament as prestigious as the World Baseball Classic.

In terms of the WBC itself, there wasn't one call or one moment that really sticks out above the rest. All of the moments really add up to an experience that I'll never forget.

S.B. - As you indicated, the WBC is your final International Tournament (Barring potential Olympics down the road). Was it your most memorable experience?

C.D. - I have stated publicly that this was my last time on the field at the international level for as long as I have the national supervisor

job. This was the fifth time in nine years that I have represented Canada at an international event and it's been a great run. I really feel blessed that I've been able to have those experiences. I really want to focus on my new position with Baseball Canada and help other umpires in our program to get some of those opportunities.

Umpiring at the international level takes a lot of time and a lot of commitment...you can't work twenty games during the season and then go and work at a world championship. I have a young family and I want to be involved with them growing up...so it's not possible to work 100+ games per season any more to get ready for these events. I am going to be involved in supervision at the international level and that will be a new challenge for me too.

The WBC was definitely the most memorable experience for me...it would be really tough to top that. I got to be an MLB umpire for a few weeks...is there anything better?

Extra Innings.... With Baseball Canada Supervisor, Corrie Davis

Personal:

Age: 36

Home: Sherwood Park, Alberta

Occupation: Regional Sales Director, FRP Manufacturing Inc.

Years umpiring: 25

Family: Married eight years to a very supportive wife, Teresa. Proud daddy to a four year old son, Jamie, and a one year old daughter, Sarah.

Top of 1st...What age were you when you first started umpiring?

12 years old.

Bottom of 2nd...Did you ever play baseball?

Yes, but not very well.

Top of 3rd...Are you superstitious? Do you have any pre-game rituals before you umpire?

Not superstitious...but I never like to eat before a game.

Top of 4th...What is your favourite movie of all time?

A tie between a couple of baseball mov-

ies...**Bull Durham and The Natural.**

Bottom of 5th...What hobbies do you have?

I love to golf...but don't get to very often. I'm also a novice woodworker.

Top of 6th...If you could make a 4-some for a round of golf, including yourself, who would the other 3 players be?

Martin Luther King, Wayne Gretzky, and my son, Jamie.

It's the 7th inning stretch...are you reaching for a beer, wine, soda, coffee, juice, or other?

Coffee.

Top of 8th...What is your favourite ball park food?

Hot dogs.

Bottom of 9th...You have umpired in some really high profile tournaments? What has been the best city you have visited for baseball?

Nationally – Trois Rivieres, Quebec

Internationally – San Juan, Puerto Rico

It's a tie game....Let's go extra innings with Corrie Davis....

Top of the 10th...A serious question. What do you hope to accomplish as National Supervisor?

I want us to raise the bar...encourage umpires to set high goals and commit to personal development...and I want us to create the infrastructure and provide the support to help them achieve those goals.

Bottom of 11... Do you foresee yourself cutting back on umpiring with all your extra duties now?

I still want to umpire...but my days of 100+ games per season are over.

Bottom 12... Do you have any advice for a young umpire?

Never stop trying to improve...use every game, every situation to learn something (even if you learning what NOT to do). Hard work is going to earn you at lot of opportunities.