

Hey Blue! Online

B C B A S E B A L L U M P I R E S A S S O C I A T I O N

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Oval Office
- Gearheads
- Photos
- Umpire
- Cartoons
- Eager Beaver
- Sighting!

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CLINIC SEASON UNDERWAY!

Spring has sprung, or so says Wiarton Willy, the famous groundhog prognosticator.

With that comes BCBUA clinic season!

Level 1 and 2 clinics are well underway around the province, particularly in the Lower Mainland and Island districts. Okanagan Clinics are right around the corner.

We have already successfully held a High Level National clinic in Abbotsford, and we are looking forward to the regular National Clinic in Kamloops in April, Advanced Clinic in and our annual Umpire Academy.

If you are unsure of when your association is holding their

annual umpire clinic, be sure to check out our webpage at



Clinics are Cool!

www.bcbua.ca and get more information, or talk to your local UIC or Area Rep.

Clinics are free, but you are required to be a member to attend.. The BCBUA supports life long learning so if you have

not been to a clinic for a few years, its time to check that out again! Our clinics change each year. There is new content and new ways of delivering that content. As a reminder, everyone starts at level 1 now. And for level 2, it's a 2 year process—Defence Rules and Offence Rules. You have to attend and pass both segments to be fully certified and have a chance to move up to the Provincial Level 3 program.

This year's level 3 exam moves to the National database and there are special instructions on how to sign up for that. Check out Eager Beaver's report to find out more information. See you at a clinic this spring!

ADVANCED CLINIC DATES SET!

There will be 2 opportunities for level 3 umpires to certify or re-certify in 2020. One will take place in the Victoria area on March 14 in Duncan.

The other will be in

Kamloops on April 4-5 weekend. Contact your local UIC for details and check the BCBUA website for registration details. As a reminder, all level 3 umpires must

attend an Advanced Clinic at least once every 3 years in order to maintain your status as a level 3 umpire. Failure to do so will drop you to level 2. No exceptions.

From the Chief's Desk

By Provincial Supervisor of Umpires Steve Boutang

Well folks, we have arrived at our favourite time of the year.. a time when snow is melting and fields are being prepared for play. Baseball Season is just around the corner. I know most of you are happy to get onto the field, and you're raring to go for that first game.

But the problem for most of you is that you arrive at that first game unprepared. You scramble around to find your gear bag and head out the door and get to the park only to discover that your gear smells bad, might be moldy from old sweat stains, is wrinkled, and looks generally like you slept in it.

Don't forget that shoelace that broke on your last game and those shin guards that are missing a strap. I haven't even got into your physical condition – or lack thereof.

Most people fall into this category when the season starts. Try to avoid this with a few simple preparation tips.

You know the season is coming, so get your gear bag out and go through a checklist to see that your uniform is all there. Maybe wash your jersey or iron the pants. Make sure your hat is presentable. Make sure it all fits. Lord knows we sometimes grow (taller for young people, and wider for adults). Maybe we need to order a new shirt or hat. Get that done weeks ahead of time.

Make sure your gear is in good shape. I have forgotten to change the shoelace in my plate shoes all winter and then arrive at the park in spring to discover my problem when I'm getting dressed 20 minutes before the first pitch. Not a good time for that revelation. So check ahead of time. Make sure your shin guard straps and chest protector harness is in good order. Make sure your jock strap isn't worn out or hanging on by a thread. Check to see if you have adequate socks and underwear. Check that your indicator and ball bags are in your bag. Do a complete inventory.

Once all your gear is in order and you have cleaned everything, there is nothing wrong with doing some stretching for a few weeks before the season starts. Don't go into your first game after sitting on your duff for 5 months without moving around. Never ends well. Especially as you get older.

If you take your game seriously, or are doing some kind of high level baseball, you need to do some mental exercises... practise your signals in front of a mirror, try new things that the supervisor from your last tournament suggested working on, do some eye exercises to practice following the ball into the glove. If you go out to a field where players are practicing, ask the catchers if you can see some pitches for 5 minutes. It all helps.

Finally, and this goes for everyone... refresh yourself on the rules by looking over the rulebook and making sure you are aware of new rules and interpretations for the upcoming season. Most of them are covered at clinics, but if you haven't got to one, then this is a must.

Hopefully when you actually get to the field you will have done some of these things.... And if not, then good luck.. have a great season everyone, and remember to look after yourselves out there!



From the Oval Office

President's Report—By Rhonda Pauls

Welcome to the 2020 baseball season! We are off to a flying start and are gearing up for a very busy spring!

I hope you have all enjoyed the “off season” and are ready to get back on the field. As always, our season starts with clinics and we are experiencing one of our earliest start-ups in many years! As of press time, we had 77 clinics booked!

We kicked off the season with our senior umpires getting some instruction from 2 of our favorite MLB umpires, Mike Muchlinski and Tripp Gibson. Some great learning took place both in the cages/base work and in the classroom where we looked at some new aspects of umpiring this year.

Concussion awareness and education has been a very prominent topic in all sports as of late. With the support of Baseball BC, we were able to bring in a concussion educator to teach about protocols and the latest research around this topic. In addition, some of our younger members were able to receive “baseline testing” so that in the future they would have a comparator if they ever sustain a concussion. We were very thankful for this opportunity.

In addition to the new NCAA conduct standards expected on all PBL fields this year, we also took a look at Mental Preparedness and Well-Being. There are many aspects to being an official that are not easy, and the stress and anxiety we can experience from time to time can be hard to deal with. It was great to be able to break that down and identify some proactive strategies and share experiences.

It really reinforced the fact that we are an umpire “family” and that part of our job is to look after each other, both on and off the field. A very heartfelt thank you goes out to our brother Mike Green for being a leader in talking about mental wellness. His impact on our members was profound and beyond valuable.

Some things on the horizon – we will be hosting 2 Level 3 clinics this year, one in the interior and one on the island. Please go to “clinics” on the BCBUA web page to register for either the March 14th Level 3 clinic in Duncan, or the April 4-5 Level 3 clinic in Kamloops.

We will be publishing the 2020 Provincial Championship Schedule on our website very early this year. Watch for our “Expression of Interest” on our homepage. Please start thinking about this as soon as you can. We realize that all of our provincial tournaments take place during prime holiday summer weekends, but we can't do them without you!

Please join me in welcoming our new Provincials Chairman Mr. John Pentland who will be coordinating all of the applications this year. For those of you who can't make up your mind about which tournament to apply for, please apply for ALL DATES that you would be able to work, and we will place you in the best tournament for your success.

I mentioned in my previous report that we were working on a development clinic and new resources for our UIC's this year. Although this project has hit a few roadblocks, we continue to work towards this goal. We have had to extend our timeline, but by the end of the season we should have some valuable content for our members. Stay tuned!

Some of you may know that we are in a contract negotiation year with our partner leagues. Your leadership team is working hard to have these agreements in place prior to the championship season. We have a significant load in terms of events to cover, and we are doing our best to represent your interests fairly. We will be sure to post a completion update on the website when we have this all in place.

The last thing I wanted to update you on is the work of the AdHoc Conduct committee. As mentioned in the last newsletter, this is a “think tank” of all our partner groups working together to come up with ways of improving behavior on the field and in the bleachers. To date we have done the following: agreed to new fence signs going up on playing fields with a number of “reminders” about our roles; planned use of social media for educational content delivery; presentations for coaches, players, umpires and fans regarding the expectations and responsibilities of each; increased game feedback opportunities for umpires; agreement by our PBL partners to a higher standard of conduct similar to the NCAA; and last but certainly not least is the mutual feedback exchange between the PBL and the BCBUA/PCBUA. We still have a lot of work to do, but we are optimistic about the progress we have made to date.

In closing, I wish you all a great start to your season. Get into the rules and practice your mechanics! We are proud of our members and the BCBUA brand we represent. Have confidence knowing you belong to a great organization that works hard every day to keep “*Growing great umpires*”. Stay safe, and as always,...my inbox is open....

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NATIONAL UMPIRE CLINIC

This year's National Umpire Certification Clinic will again take place in Kamloops from April 2-5. This will be the 11th annual clinic in the tournament capital of BC.

As per usual this is an invite only clinic for those level 3's identified as potential National um-

pires, as well as all level 4-5 umpires in BC.

This year's guest instructors include Ron Shewchuk, Andrew Higgins, and Jon Oko.

BCBUA will be hosting a number of umpires and provincial education leaders from across Canada who are coming to Kamloops to gain new

ideas and information in an attempt to improve their own learning programs.

What a great opportunity this is for our umpires and our association to show off what we have built over the years.

Registration is closed so please notify the secretary at secretary@bcbua.ca today if you wish to attend.



MLB - HIRINGS AND RETIRINGS



When you tune in to see your favourite MLB team play this year you will undoubtedly notice a few new faces.

Several umpires have or will be hired prior to the 2020 season to replace veterans who have retired.

Veterans Gary Cederstrom and Dana Demuth have packed it in after long and distinguished careers.

With the new Collective Agreement for umpires taking effect, retirement provisions are sweeter than ever these days so

look for more vets to pull the pin early.

In addition, with the untimely and sad passing of Eric Cooper, youngster Nic Lentz was hired to fill that position earlier this winter.

More hirings will be coming.

OTHER CONTRACT NEWS...

In other news from the Collective Agreement, the contract now includes a provision for umpires to take part in a mid season training camp of sorts. This is the first time this has occurred. Additionally, the oft spoken of "robot umpires" will NOT be a thing in the coming few seasons, although it is likely on the horizon.

The MLB Umpires Association agreed to support MLB's efforts to enhance the computer-ized strike zone, although it will not be used in games this year or next.

Last season MLB umpires were 97.3 percent correct as a staff. Wow!



COREY KLEIN TO T-12

BCBUA Veteran umpire Corey Klein has been selected to attend Tournament 12 at Rogers Center this September.

It will be the first time Klein has attended the tournament.

Klein is the UIC of Burnaby Minor Baseball.

In other national news, BC received 15 assignments for National tournaments for 2020.



UMPIRE SCHOOL-2020

BCBUA Umpires Craig Burt and Scott Barden recently completed the 5 week Wendelstedt School of Professional Umpiring. Upon completion of the program, Burt was invited to the Advanced 1 week placement course and was also successful.

Pending VISA approval from the US Government, Burt will begin his profes-

sional umpiring career this summer! Congrats Craig on this tremendous accomplishment. The BCBUA and all your fellow umpires are so incredibly proud of you.

Barden was also successful in landing a position in the summer collegiate Northwoods League, and invited to come back to Pro School for another look.

Again, a tremendous accomplishment for another of our upcoming umpires in BC.

Great work men!



RON BOUTANG SCHOLARSHIP

If you're a young umpire (18-30) and you have some talent, why not consider attending one of the Professional Umpire Schools like Craig and Scott recently did. You never know what might happen.

Both of these umpires have been BCBUA members and umpires for just a few years. And because they chose to apply for our scholarship they got the opportunity of their lives. Think about it for 2021!



GEARHEADS—For Those Who Can't Get Enough

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by Brad Jones

In this installment of GearHeads, we will be summarizing the highlights of innovation in 2019 and what are the top new products to buy:

Davis or Smitty (version 2) Poly-spandex pants:

With Smitty's introduction of Poly-spandex pants two years ago, these pants have been hot commodities for umpires because of their lightness and coolness in hot weather. Made with the same material as stretchy golf pants, Smitty's version one of the Poly-dex pants hit the market to rave reviews as summer pants that make them so light they do not feel like you are wearing pants. This winter, Davis followed suit and offered their MLB version of the Poly-dex pants. Smitty, to re-establish itself as the go-to Poly-dex pants on the market later this summer offered its second edition of the pants. While being light, stretchy and cool, the pants do not hold well in windy weather with umpires having to weigh down their hems to keep them from fluttering in the wind. Also, the first version of the Smitty's pants were susceptible to fading in a long season of being worn in the sun and the fabric will melt with friction to the fabric like sliding on gym floors in clinic drills. Other all, these pants are worth the investment and the best option for those hot summer months of baseball season.

All-star Magnesium (Mag) mask:

In the last decade, many equipment companies have been working on creating the best mask for baseball. Any mask, especially an umpire's mask must have two redeemable qualities: be light and be strong. While the pads are what really protects you in any hit to the mask, the cage needs to be designed to be sturdy and durable while not weighing your head down. Various materials have tried to supplant steel/hollow steel framed cages. Various companies have tried Aluminum, Titanium and titanal, and last year All-star launched its Magnesium (Mag) mask. Magnesium offers a unique blend of benefits that Aluminum, Titanium or Steel have while also addressing their weaknesses. In a nut shell, Magnesium is light- weight, stiff and can take a licking without bending. It is still is more expensive than steel but well in the range of aluminum and cheaper than titanium. It does not weld well and the cemented frames take time to cure resulting in an increased cost. What the FM4000Mag design does that combats this limitation is by molding the frame not welding it. By doing so, the mask becomes very light and durable. Further, the mask uses All Star's diamond tube design to dissipate impact and open sight lines. While All-star has special pads for its rig, going with high end pads like Team Wendy will accessorize this beast into being a dependable piece of protection.

Umpire Custom Products Flex (version 2) Chest Protector harness:

Canadian umpire Ray Brownlie's forte into the umpire merchandise landscape began with the design and distribution of his magnetic lineup card holder and his first version of the Rayflex triangular chest protector harness. Ray has been busy the past year in diversifying his line of products with the umpire in mind and while the Rayflex was one of the best harnesses on the market, Ray did not lay idle and sit on his laurels. The second version of the Flex chest protector harness take the neoprene triangular design and beefs it up making the new harness the best way to keep your chest protector fitted to your body. All you have to do is take one shot to your collar bone to know that a sagging chest protector exposes you to injury. Getting a first-class harness puts the chest protector where it should be: over your shoulders and completely covering your clavicles. The new Flex design has long straps to make it adaptable to any four-point chest protector.

Majestic side panel shirts:

Like with the Poly-spandex pants, Smitty jumped on the scene with the side panel shirts (grey panels for black; black panels for sky blue) two years ago to meet the retail demand for the 2016 MLB Majestic shirts. Smitty, followed by Honig's in the US and +Pos filled the demand of weekend warriors who wanted to look like the MLB umpires on TV. Smitty's success in meeting this demand did not go unnoticed by Majestic and in a rare move, started producing the MLB shirt for the retail market. If you like the panel design, the Smitty design does not use the same fabric (it is quite heavier and less breathable), nor do they offer the attention to detail (in the skirt or the panels) of the shirt.

The Majestic is definitely worth the price difference and worth looking like the arbiters on TV.

Smitty's plate shoes:

If there is a theme in this edition of Gearheads, it is the move by Smitty to get a good chunk of the umpire market in North America. While still trying to erase its old image as cheap and crappy gear, Smitty has worked to improve the quality of its merchandise while still keeping it affordable. By doing so, Smitty has offered gear that opens doors and competition for all umpires to look professional like their MLB counterparts. With the demise of the 3n2 umpire shoes as the entry level plate shoes, umpires' only option has been the MLB supplier New Balance. While the go to plate shoe for established umpires, the New Balance shoes are a wishful perk for umpires with limited resources and growing feet. Smitty, like with its shirts and pants, has created a pair of plate shoes that are a step above the quality of the old 3n2 shoes while giving both a professional look and an affordable cost. It has taken the old design of its counterpart, making it look vaguely like a New Balance, to meet the needs of cash-strapped umpires while building a shoe that is durable, protective, comfortable and stable on all surfaces, in all conditions and through all situations.



The BCBUA is truly grateful to have friends within the MLB Umpire Ranks. Almost on a yearly basis at least one of these professionals attends one of our clinics in BC. This year it was MLB veterans Mike Muchlinski and Tripp Gibson who made their way north to teach at our High Level Umpire clinic in Abbotsford.

32 of the province's finest umpires and up and comers formed the group that took part in 2 days of learning with the best. Cage work, video review, class work, and base drills gave participants a real variety of skills to practise. There was a concussion seminar and a mental health seminar to round out the weekend.

It's pretty rare to have MLB umpires travel to Canada on a regular basis. That these fellows give so much of their precious personal time to us is a real testament to them as first class individuals above all else. The BCBUA is grateful to them for their continued support of our program.





ABOVE: Tripp Gibson (MLB #73) talks about positioning as the plate umpire.

BELOW: Students and Instructors talk about plays at first base and how to adjust your positioning on the fly.





Above: MLB Umpire #76 Mike Muchlinski works with Les Maerov in the cage session.

Below: Rhonda Pauls offers additional thoughts on the situation .





Above: Tripp (left) and Mike (Right) talk about situations on the field and how to handle them properly.

Below: Everyone shares a laugh.



2020 Provincials Dates and Locations Announced!

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Level:</u>	<u>Location:</u>
May 22-24	John Main Classic (U13)	Cloverdale/Langley
July 17-19	15U AAA (BC MINOR)	TBA
July 23-25	18U College Prep (BC MINOR)	Kelowna
July 23-26	Sr PBL	Langley
July 23-26	BC SUMMER GAMES (16U)	Maple Ridge
July 30-Aug 2	Bantam PBL	Lower Mainland TBA
July 30-Aug 2	13U AAA (BC MINOR)	Victoria
July 30-Aug 2	18U AAA (BC MINOR)	Campbell River
July 30-Aug 2	18U AAA Tier 1 (Baseball BC)	Whalley
July 31-Aug 2	Jr Men's Tier 2 (BC MINOR)	TBA
July 31-Aug 3	18U AAA Tier 2 (Baseball BC)	White Rock
July 31-Aug 3	Sr Men AAA	Coquitlam
Aug 6-9	Jr PBL	Victoria
Aug 6-9	18U AA (Baseball BC)	TBA
Aug 6-9	15U AA (Baseball BC)	Duncan
Aug 6-9	13U AAA (Baseball BC)	Kamloops
Aug 6-9	13 U AA (Baseball BC)	Richmond
Aug 6-10	15U AAA (Baseball BC)	White Rock
Sept 4-7	Sr Men AA	Lower Mainland TBA
Sept 25-27	18 U Fall Classic (BC MINOR)	Lower Mainland TBA

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN UMPIRING ANY PROVINCIALS, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL TO PROVINCIALS CHAIR JOHN PENTLAND. DETAILS CAN BE FOUND ON OUR "EXPRESSION OF INTEREST" FORM ON THE WEBSITE. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AVAILABLE FOR THE ENTIRE TOURNAMENT. WE WILL WORK WITH YOU!

KELOWNA UMPIRE RECOGNIZED

Long-time Kelowna Umpire in Chief Darcy Rysz was recently recognized for over a decade of service to the Central Okanagan Umpire Association.

Pacific Sport Okanagan recently handed out a number of awards to dedicated volunteers across several sports in the Okanagan. Rysz was amongst the recipients, and among the only baseball nominees.

Rysz was instrumental in forming the Central Okanagan Umpire Association which saw the amalgamation of umpire groups in Kelowna, Rutland, and Westside Minor Baseball Associations, long before player amalgamation took place. His dedication and devotion to umpire development in the Okanagan has earned him praise and respect over the years amongst parents and peers alike.

Rysz served as Area Rep for BCBUA for a decade before recently stepping down from that role. He recently moved to Nelson for business opportunities and will be working with the Kootenay umpires in the near future. Congrats Darcy! And thanks for everything you have done for umpiring in BC!



EAGER BEAVER SIGHTING!

Hey everybody. Eager Beaver here. We have a new development from Baseball Canada.

As you know we are working to integrate our program more closely to the Baseball Canada program. The benefit to us is that we will have better access to BBC educational and training resources, easier transition for our umpires who travel (this could be anyone) and more opportunity for travel. Most importantly, though, is that we will teach and develop our young umpires the same way with the same resources as everyone else in the country. A truly standardized approach.

As part of this integration we will no longer offer a purely BC Level 3 exam. At no cost to the individual member we will go to the Baseball Canada website, create a profile and access the Level 3 National exam. If you follow these instructions we can walk you thru how to access this exam. Along with the exam you will also have access to all the videos and articles available to the instructors in the National Program plus the online rule book and various mechanics manuals (2 umpire, 3 umpire, etc.)

You only get one try at this exam each year so once you get to the exam mark each question with the 1st answer available. At the end of the exam you will have a choice between PRINT and SUBMIT.....~~DO NOT SUBMIT!!~~ ~~Print~~ your exam, stick your nose in the books and research each question (remember this is a National exam so look in the Canadian content part of the rule book too). Then go back to your exam, answer the questions correctly and only then click on SUBMIT.

So here we go, follow these instructions and GOOD LUCK. EB

Eager Beaver





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"Growing Great Umpires"



To appease the fans, major-league umpires are now required to take eye exams during the seventh inning stretch.