

HEY BLUE!

Summer 2014 Edition

Volume 7: Issue 1



From the Chief's Desk Supervisor's Report

-Steve Boutang

On March 5, a true legend of umpiring and icon of baseball in Canada, Howard Chapman, passed away in Vancouver at age 75 following complications of heart surgery.

Following his career as a professional umpire, Howard became the BCBUA Provincial Supervisor from the inception of the association in 1974 until his retirement in 2009.

His 8 International tournament appearances were a record amongst umpires in this country for many years.

In 1986 Howard was named the International Umpire of the Year by the IBAF. He also served this country as the Baseball Canada Assistant Umpire Supervisor for many years.

I could go on and on about all the things Howard accomplished in his lifetime in baseball. Most of the senior umpires in this province, who were lucky enough to work with him, learned so much about the art of umpiring. And on the field there was nobody who ever matched the respect level he commanded from the players and coaches. Most of those umpires he helped went on to bigger and better things in baseball thanks to Howard's support and encouragement. And many umpires in Canada got opportunities on the world stage at his insistence. In the end, there are not enough good things to say about Howard Chapman's contribution to umpiring in this country.

I remember my first umpire clinic in 1985, and when I passed my test I got a little membership card that said I was a level 1 umpire and it was signed by Howard Chapman. So it was a real thrill to finally meet him some years later.... And I can't even begin to say how honoured I am to hold his position in this organization.

But for those of us who knew Howard off the field as well, the stories are plentiful and legendary in their own right.

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Howard Chapman, Les Swaine and Rob Allan umpiring at the Kamloops International Baseball Tournament

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From the Chief's Desk

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Howard was the butt of a lot of pranks at the Baseball Canada Convention and AGM over the years. Often, Howard's hotel room would get broken into and sabotaged by some smart aleck who would fill his bed with blankets, flowers, fruit, and once a 400 pound pumpkin. One year while the supervisors were out to dinner, someone got into his room and stripped the room bare – furniture and all – and put it all on the patio deck outside – and then closed the curtains. Needless to say, Howard – after a few drinks – was shocked and stunned to discover that his hotel room was bare when arriving for a short night sleep at an early morning hour. One time Howard even managed to lock himself out of his hotel room- wearing nothing but his skivvies- at about 2am... and was forced to wander down to the desk and ask for a spare key. What a sight to behold!

And aside from the stories of Howard's activities at the convention, Howard was probably most famous for the special words and phrases he used when he spoke, often bungling the English language in the process. He frequently used poorly worded sentences, and generally talked in Howardisms. Terms that I truly hope are repeated for all time in honour of this man we all respected.

Here's a small sampling of some of the lines we all laughed at over the years....

"What a fiasco" (Fiasco)

At a plate meeting in Kamloops one day, Howard said, "If the ball gets caught in the ivory (Ivy), have the fielders throw their arms in the air"

During a National tournament there is often a windup meal of sorts, and Howard said to the crew, "I invited the transfer lady (Translator lady) out to the umpire dinner tonight"

"I can't believe someone could let themselves go like that!" – he once said in reference to someone who had aged significantly since he had seen them 40 years ago.

"I've slept with Ossie many times!" – in reference to "rooming" with Ossie Chavarria many times over the course of the years of tournament after tournament.

There were literally dozens and dozens of things Howard said over the years that came out differently than he probably wanted them to, but that made us all laugh when he said them. And they will keep us laughing for years to come.

Howard had a penchant for eating more Chinese Buffet meals than anyone ever did..... and his favourite "Wong-Tong" (Won-Ton) soup was always a mainstay of those dinners.

He mispronounced players names and the clubs they played for. The Portland Aloha Knights were always referred to as "AHOLA", and a team from Samoa was mistakenly called "Somalia" or the "Somolians". Don Hass and I could never figure out how Somalia had enough Somolians to run a ball club!

Ron Boutang Umpire Scholarship

Applications are now being accepted for the 2015 Ron Boutang Umpire Scholarship.

Umpire School is a tremendous opportunity to learn more about umpiring, the game of baseball, and yourself. If you have a desire to improve, and take your game to the next level. Or want to pursue a job in Professional Baseball, our umpire scholarship can help you reach your goals.

The Application form can be found at www.BCBUA.ca

For more information contact Steve Boutang by email:

sboutang@shaw.ca

Hey Blue! 2.

President's Report

-John Berry

I'm delighted to have this chance to express mid-summer greetings and congratulation to the BCBUA membership! I'm sure we've all enjoyed a spring season with lots of baseball, and lots of opportunities to develop our umpiring. And now many of our members are involved in the host of tournament opportunities that seem to increase every summer.

Our spring clinics were well attended, and our instructors did their always capable job, conducting courses, using our education materials and setting us up to succeed on the field. Our mentorship approach is still developing, and we're using it to help prepare umpires at different levels for the next steps in their umpiring. This year, we sent six umpires to a Baseball Canada Caravan in Alberta; this gives us an even stronger complement of trained instructors.

We have more BCBUA members than ever working international, national and provincial tournaments. That's a wonderful testament to our development efforts, and a great opportunity for us as individual umpires. We also provide leagues and associations with an essential resource!

There is always turnover in umpire world, and we need to keep attracting new umpires, and further developing

those we have. In most parts of the province, we are a little short of umpires, and that means many of us are asked to do a few more games than we might prefer. I want to take a moment to recognize the umpires who are so willing to go out and do a game because we're needed and we want players to have a good game – even if it wasn't all that convenient for us to do that game. There are a lot of umpires who are really dedicated to the game, and sometimes leagues and even the BCBUA may take that a bit too much for granted. So, thanks!!

As you may have seen on our website, the board positions of President and Treasurer are open for nominations until September 1. Our AGM will follow, normally in November. Elections will take place then for those positions, and for half the area representative positions. We've also got assistant area representative positions, committee roles and other volunteer assignments through which umpires can be more involved in their association. Participation is always welcome, and makes each of us and our association stronger.

On a personal note, at our AGM this year I will be completing twelve years as your President, and won't be standing for re-election to this post. It has been a privilege to serve this association, and deal with the challenges and opportunities that come with it. I look forward to the new ideas and approaches that a change in leadership brings, and build on the strengths and accomplishments that we've been able to achieve

July 13, 2015

Notice to all BCBUA members from George Smith, Secretary:

In accordance with our bylaws, nominations for the position of President (2 year term) and Treasurer (2 year term) are now open.

The appointed Returning Officer is George Smith, Secretary.

Nominations must be submitted in writing to the Returning Officer either electronically or in written form by midnight September 1, 2015. If only one nomination is submitted, the nominee will be declared elected.

Full text of the bylaws can be found under About Us on our website. www.bcbua.ca

Submit nominations to George Smith at bcbua@shaw.ca or gss112@shaw.ca.

Or mail to the Secretary, BCBUA, 10451 Ainsworth Cres., Richmond, BC V7A3V5

Current to July 13, 2015

President – incumbent declined to stand

Treasurer – incumbent declined to stand

President – Sean Sullivan nominated

Hey Blue! 3.

Memoirs of a GFI Rookie

-Sean Sullivan

The annual Grand Forks Invitational baseball tournament wrapped up on July 5th. It is a six day tournament that stretched over Canada Day and Independence Day. The crews wore Red Baseball Canada hats on Canada Day and black USA hats on Independence Day. I must say the fans, Canadians and especially the American players were very appreciative of this show of solidarity between our two countries. It was a 12 team tournament with eight umpires looking after five games a day in +35 to 40C heat. The line up of officials included Rob Allan, Steve Boutang, Will Hunter, Scott Eckardt, Matt Lowndes, Kris Hartley and two rookies to the tournament, Corey Klein and myself, Sean Sullivan. We also had the good fortune to have Don Hass, Rhonda Pauls and Bill MacMillan present to provide us their perspective from the side lines. This was a very valuable learning opportunity. This is often referred to as the best baseball tournament in the province year in and year out due to the calibre of teams it attracts and due to the \$20K winners cheque. As an umpire when you put that much money on the line, with semi pro and college players going all out, you need to be focused and concentrating on your responsibilities all the time.



As with most rookie assignments Corey and I looked after most of the menial tasks, such as preparing the baseballs for all the games, fetching water for the senior officials and starting off in games that were expected to be a more lopsided affair. The crews started off all three man, but by the third day of the tournament we moved all games to a four man crew. This was done mainly to provide Rob Allan an excellent precursor to the Pan Am games and for Steve and possibly a few others to hone their skills prior to a Senior national championship or Tournament 12. For me, it was an excellent opportunity to work with these senior officials as I knew even if I screwed up a rotation, which did happen, that they would fill the gaps to ensure someone was there to make the call. It should be noted that missed rotations were often the brunt of the jokes at the midnight happy hour debriefings back at the motel, yes motel people, it is Grand Forks.

For the most part the games were competitive and very few on field incidents occurred. I happened to draw the plate on a mid tournament game between the home town Grand Forks entry vs. the Northwest Honkers, who were undefeated at the time and raking in all of their games. The home town team lost a few key players just prior to the tournament and were undeniably the weakest team at the tournament. Grand Forks had already dropped a 24-0 game earlier. Thank goodness for the mercy rule after 6 1/2 or 7. So the Honkers hang a 4 spot on the board in the first inning. They continued with another large inning in the second. I told the coach on his way by to the dugout that his team better be prepared to start swinging at a larger strike zone. The coach knew why and what was going to happen. Third inning the #3 hitter came to the plate for the Honkers. He had been raking all tournament. The first pitch was up and in a little, strike one, batter: "Really", me "yes sir, that was a strike". The batter shaking his head got back in the box and took a second pitch exactly in the same spot, strike two, batter "Really", me "yes sir", batter "is that a strike?", me "it is today", batter "where was that really", me, "up and probably in a little, but good enough to hit today".

No more complaints the rest of the game as the next pitch split the plate in half and he roped a double of the left field wall. Honkers coach came by after that half inning where they put up a 7 spot and said keep that huge strike zone going! Game on, some may say that is my usual strike zone, but today it was abnormally large for them, and normal for when Grand Forks was at the plate. Final score in 6 1/2 was Honkers 19 Grand 0.

Heading into the playoff round Corey and I had done at least two plates and multiple games at First and Third. They didn't trust yet, for good reason, to roam the second base position in four man. I can't recall the last time I drank so much water and energy drinks and peed so little. It was a scorcher each and every day and this hurt the crowd size during the day games. The showcase game each night, which started around 8 PM always drew well.

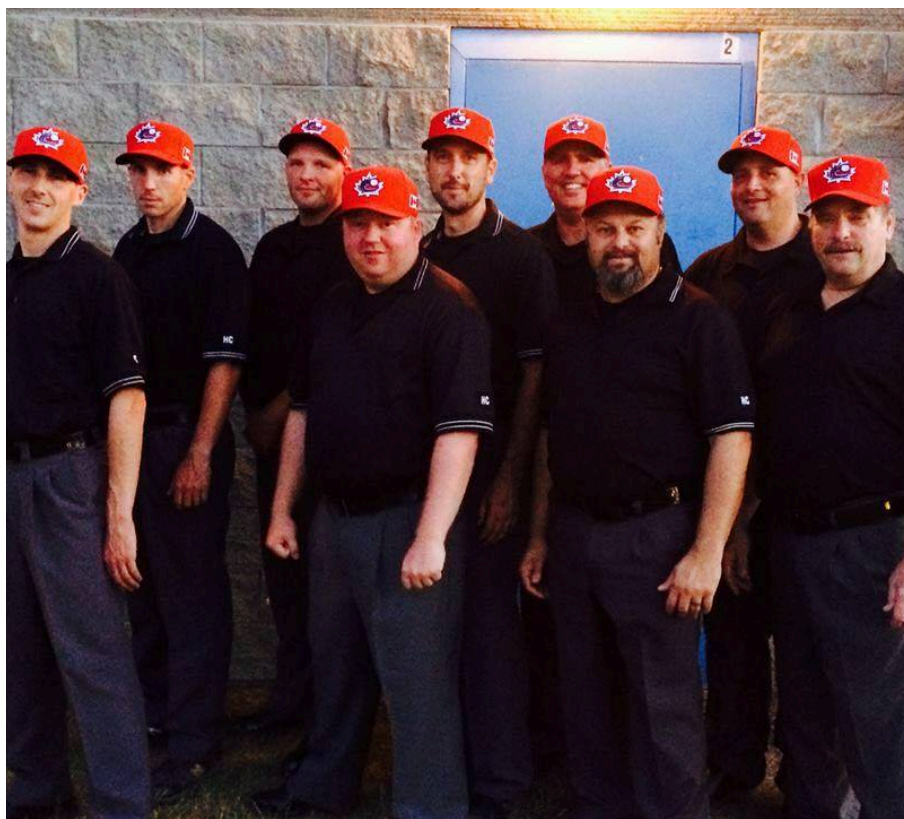
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Memoirs of a GFI Rookie

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A Grand Forks tradition is the right field beer garden where all the action happens. Drunks abound and each night game ran the risk of multiple streakers taking off from the right field bleachers across the outfield and over the centre field or left field fence, where hopefully a buddy waited with their clothes. Never saw one get picked up by the Cops because within 15 minutes they were back in the beer gardens picking up where they left off. The topic of streakers was often covered off at the plate meeting with both coaches on establishing an over under on how many streakers we were going to have. The most was five the first night, but it tapered off into the weekend.



The 2015 Umpire Crew of the Grand Forks International Baseball Tournament

All in all this was an excellent experience and one where I grew as an umpire in two main areas, one is the technical side which is rotations and positioning and the second and probably most important at this level is game management. By that I mean how to handle the coaches and players when close plays, upset players/coaches when things are not going their way, paying attention to in game incidents that may lead to a bean ball situation or hard slides and attempting to diffuse that prior to it occurring.

Thank you to all the Senior officials at the tournament for taking the time to provide constructive feedback after each game, and sometimes between innings after plays. I can't speak for Corey, but I do know from our drive together, he got as much out of this as I did. Hopefully more officials that are ready for this experience get the opportunity as it is a grind, but one that is very rewarding in the end. You have no choice but to improve as an umpire when you are working with international and nationally experienced officials. Thanks to everyone in the on and off field crew!

Area 5: Lower Mainland South Report -Rick Antoniak

Baseball has been booming in the Lower Mainland this year. We currently have 343 members in the Lower Mainland South, an increase of 22% (62) over last year. Great job! We welcome North Langley Baseball into our area.

This spring we had 256 members participate in our 13 Level 1 and 2 clinics. Thanks to the Hosts, UICs, and Clinic Instructors who spent time making that happen.

Our area hosted five BC (Minor) Baseball Provincial Championships this summer.

- 11U (Mosquito) A – Cloverdale – July 31th – August 3th
- 11U (Mosquito) AA – Surrey Canadian – July 31th – August 3th
- 11U (Mosquito) AAA T2 – Cloverdale – July 31th – August 3th
- 13U (Peewee) A – Surrey Canadian – July 31th – August 3th
- 15U (Bantam) AAA – White Rock – July 31th – August 3rd

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Hey Blue! 5.

2015 Provincial Committee Report

The BCBUA Provincials Committee was responsible for allocating 18 tournaments this season including two in the Interior, three on the Island, and thirteen in the Lower Mainland. We have had 105 applications to work those tournaments and were able to offer 87 different umpires assignments.

The BCBUA Provincials Committee consists of the President, the Provincial Supervisor, and the Chair. Once the various organizations (Baseball BC, BC (Minor) Baseball, PBL, Junior (U21), and Senior) establish their tournaments for the season, the President consults with the Provincial Supervisor and selects the Supervisors for each tournament. Then the Provincials Committee goes to work. Applications are solicited on-line, targeting a May 31 deadline. Early in June, after gathering as many applications as possible, we draw up an initial assignment list for each tournament, and communicate with the tournament supervisor. At this point we may need to do more recruiting to work the tournaments in a particular area, or whether we may need to work with the host and send some travelling umpires. Each tournament list becomes a work in progress as umpire availability is factored in and alternates are added. Some changes could be made right up to the tournament itself.

Everything is considered when assignments are made: we try to spread the work around as much as possible and to put each qualified umpire in the best position to be successful. We also want to do the best job we can for the teams in the tournament while at the same time helping the hosts keep an eye on costs.

Area 6 Report

-Mark Wright

It has already been a busy year in Area 6 and promises to continue on. It began early in the year as two of our own, Joe Mallinson and myself, were fortunate enough to attend Professional Umpire School in Florida for five weeks in January. We hosted two clinics this year in area 6 our level 1 and level 2 clinics in Kamloops with a total of 31 students attending the clinics as well a number of our members attending clinics elsewhere.

We were once again pleased to host the province's national clinic again in Kamloops and look forward to continue hosting the event for years to come. We were also fortunate enough to host the first ever umpire academy for up and coming umpires throughout the province.

Congratulations go out to Matt Hicketts and Brody LaFrance for successful completion of the Academy. The coming weeks will continue to be busy for the members of Area 6. Kamloops will be hosting Senior Provincials from July 31 to August 3.

Two of our members were also lucky enough to be selected for National Assignments. Congratulations go out to Joe Mallinson for being selected to work Pee Wee Westerns in Coquitlam. I was also fortunate enough to be selected to work Pee Wee Nationals in Repentigny, Quebec. Overall it has been another successful year in Area 6.



Hey Blue! 6.

From the Chief's Desk

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Howard never owned a computer, and infact he only got a cell phone in the last 10 years. Once in a while if he was expecting an important call, you might have even seen him answering the phone in the middle of an inning. And getting in touch with Howard was often an experience in itself. He would leave a message if you didn't answer.... Always the same thing in the same tone of voice. "This is Howard Chapman calling. Please give me a call at 604-783-...." never any more, never any less. He probably was not even aware that everyone has call display these days and already knew he had called.

You may be laughing by now, but this is all true!

There are so many things to smile and think about when we talk about Howard. Things that we will always remember and cherish. Things that will stick in our minds forever. His voice and his mannerisms. The sound and signal he made when calling "Strike 1", with the flick of his wrist and clenching of his right hand.

The one thing Howard said over the years that has probably caught on more than anything, are these illustrious words we live by... the ones we so often share at the plate meeting with the umpire working the dish... "It's a big game.... D.F.U.!"

And with that, our friend, we bid adieu.



BCBUA Umpires Phil Bourgeois, Rob Allan, Will Hunter wearing their 'HC' Patches in memory of Howard

The Umpire School

-Mark Wright

I was fortunate enough to be one of two people this year to receive the Ron Boutang Scholarship and attend Professional Umpire School. I along with Joe Mallinson attended The Umpire School in Vero Beach, Florida. We were two of ninety umpires in our class. These umpires were from all over the world including Venezuela, Japan, Australia, Puerto Rico and Mexico, as well as two other Canadians. For the five weeks we were there we ate, slept and breathed umpiring. We were housed at Historic Dodgertown which until 2009 was the Spring Training home of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Every day began bright and early at 7 am for breakfast in the dining hall. Then it was off to the classroom where from 8 until 12 for the entire five weeks we went through the entire rule book front and back as well as interpretations from Minor League Baseball. We frequently were tested on our rule knowledge both through written tests and on field rules applications. We also went through the entire two man mechanics manual.

After class was over we had an hour break to have lunch and rest up for the afternoon of field and plate work that was to come. At one o'clock we were out on the field in formation stretching and running through our signals.

For field work we were split into 12 crews of 7 or 8 people. I was in Crew 12. For five hours we ran drills, starting with pivoting and working up to simulated scenarios to test our 2 man mechanics and rules application, receiving feedback after each rep.

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The Umpire School

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When your crew wasn't running a drill or simulation they were acting as runners or fielders. All of the instructors were current or former minor league umpires, many with Major League experience.

Overall it was a wonderful experience and something that I will remember for the rest of my life. Even though I didn't get a job the friendships and knowledge I gained with last a lifetime and has made me a much better umpire. I highly recommend applying for the scholarship and attending pro school for anyone that is interested becoming a professional umpire or if you just want to improve your skills for the level of ball you already work.



Area 5 Report

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Umpires interested in working the 11U or 13U A Provincials should contact the Surrey Canadian or Cloverdale UICs directly.

We have also had several of our umpires participating in the John Main tournament in Aldergrove, BC Baseball wild-card and play-down tournaments, and cooperating with Little League in the CABA 16U tournaments. Thanks to everyone who has helped make those tournaments happen.

Umpire development and mentoring is an important part of the BCBUA. Not everything we need to know can be taught in a classroom or gym. Several of the associations in our area have strong mentoring programs at all ages. If you're a newer umpire who wants some pointers for your game, or a more experienced umpire of any age who wants to give a little back, contact your UIC and they can put you in touch with the right association or people to help make that happen.

Good luck with the rest of your season!



Contact Us:

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Hey Blue! 8.