

Umpire Advisory Team Minutes June 19, 2018

Members Present: John Calamari, Bill Chatterton, Mark Habighurst, Rick Morris, Bryan Richter, Damon Williams & Mike Behrens. John Dye was also in attendance.

Old Business:

- 1) Lack of extra balls – With the use of the new balls; there have been tournaments that don't have enough used balls. It is not the responsibility of the field umpires to retrieve balls that have been hit out of play. That said, we could politely ask the coaches of each team to have a fan go after them. If there is a problem, notify the TD and/or the UIC for additional balls. Allow them to decide, if new or old. In cases of nearby woods or high grass, check with them & see about additional available used balls, over & above the 1 new, 2 used balls.
- 2) Field Maintenance – Overall, with the exception of bad weather issues, fields have been in reasonable shape. One example of a concern is Fairland, which has pitching plate covers that are very high. If the individual umpire has a concern notify the TD and/or UIC for field maintenance ASAP. Coaches having questions should be directed to the TD. Stoppage of a game due to an unsafe condition, although rare, would need immediate notification of the TD and/or UIC.

New Business:

- 1) Thunder & Lightning – The group has welcomed the recent SUMmary clarifications regarding the Thunder & Lightning policy. Quite a few inconsistencies have been noted by the UAT in adhering to the policy, previous to the meeting. There is no current policy in the USSSA rules book. Per the recent email & John Dye's reemphasis of the SUM policy, there is a 30-minute suspension of play for thunder and/or lightning. When it has been determined there is a potential danger for either thunder or lightning, the coaches are to be informed of the immediate suspension of a game. Once completed, leave the field & immediately notify the UIC and/or TD. You or your partner can get word to adjoining fields that thunder and/or lightning has been observed. Those fields should take the same action & must be consistent. It is the coach's responsibility, not the umpire, to have players leave the field. Should additional occurrences take place, the clock should roll to another 30-minute suspension of play. Umpires must consistently adhere to this protocol. Stay in contact with the UIC, as they are coordinating with the TD. The TD/UIC, in accordance with the 30-minute policy, will direct a resumption of play.
- 2) Game Equality – There have been several rank & file members that have raised concern about inequality of games being officiated. For example, why some officials have worked 150+ or 200+ games. The UAT believes there are many reasons for this. The biggest is availability; some umpires have seemingly total availability & others do not. That is an umpire's choice & not a reflection of the assigner. The total # of games worked also includes preseason games (RBI/CCBC indoors) & World Series games, which all add to the game totals. For example, a 3-week WS set can

add 40 to 50 games. In reality, sometimes, coincidental rainouts create more non-worked games. Suggestions to officials would be to open up the arbiter blocks, if possible. Contact John Rimmell on weeks that you'd not be scheduled to be "on-call". Also, just getting constructive feedback from John Rimmell and/or John Dye to improve one's game to "move up on the list". Given that the assigning of games is a sometimes-thankless task, John Rimmell does a very admirable job getting it accomplished week-to-week.

- 3) New Jewelry Rule – The consensus of the UAT is that the new jewelry rule, as modified by SUM, has been very positive. There have been significantly less issues or slowing down of the game to deal with players wearing jewelry. There has been possibly an increase in use of necklaces & bracelets, but that may be more a perception, rather than fact, without the facial jewelry concerns.
- 4) Batting the Lineup – Feedback regarding this change, has also been positive. The group felt that teams more often used it during pool play than bracket play. Teams appear satisfied with the additional option. There may be teams that don't totally understand it & therefore, don't utilize it, but that's their decision. Umpires should be willing to explain it, as needed. John Dye emphasized that in the Roster Batting, there will be multiple AP's & 9 fielders.
- 5) New Courtesy Runner (last completed at bat) – Ultimately, it is the coach's responsibility to be aware which option is available to the team. That being said, as umpires, we need to keep an efficient lineup card. In other words, we must take the card out, record the changes & be proactive in preventative officiating. Don't allow a coach to incorrectly make a mistake. The consequence to the offending team is too great & in the end, we'll have a lot of explaining to do.
- 6) Other items:
 - a. Apparently, the Blast @ the Beach tournament had an option for umpires to utilize the room for a Sunday night stay. The UAT & even John Dye weren't sure if this was a new thing or not. For those that used the extra day, it was beneficial. For the most part, officials want to get back home. We do not know how many might have accepted.
 - b. UAT asked John Dye about whether the # of games being played is down this year. He estimated that it was indeed lower by about 5-to10 %. Still many games to be officiated. He was aware that a few outside groups have scheduled tournaments, but not on a regular basis. He didn't believe this was a major factor.
 - c. Games suspended due to rain were discussed. An umpire may stop a game, but cannot terminate the game. Should field conditions deteriorate, the umpire can suspend. That information must be relayed to the UIC & they will pass it on to the TD. They confer with USSSA management for a final decision to play or not. In the end, they have the final decision to go home due to bad weather.