

Summary of November 1, 2021 Umpire Advisory Team Meeting

On November 1, 2021, the Umpire Advisory Team (UAT) held a periodic meeting. UAT members in attendance were Bryan Richter, President, Joe Holonich, Secretary, Damon Williams, Rick Morris, Bill Chatterton, John Calamari and Joann Brickwedde.

The meeting was called to order by Bryan Richter. Topics discussed included:

- Lessons Learned from Fall Season

The first topic discussed was an amalgamation of several umpire camp discussions about C level games. It was noted that C level games work for the circumstances they were intended. If C games were eliminated, there would be a need for fewer umpires. In addition, it was reported that some umpires who express concern with C level games often will turn back high-level games when assigned to the better teams.

Ultimately it was agreed that Softball Umpires of Maryland (SUM) is not responsible for determining what team can enter a tournament. However, if individual umpires want, they can always move to other organizations but there may be less games available.

The UAT also spent consideration time discussing the quality of fields. Perspectives were raised about what could be done to ensure improvements in field conditions especially in heavily used areas. A significant concern with field quality was the liability of the umpire for those situations. Coaches will raise concerns to the umpiring crew about concerns with the field.

Although the site director is ultimately responsible for the field, it is the umpire who can stop the game if the umpire believes the field is unsafe. If the site director decides to continue play even if a coach raises concerns about the field quality, can the umpire stop the game if the umpire believes the field is unsafe? If the umpire does not stop the game and a player is injured in an area where the coach raised a concern can the umpire be held personally liable for that injury?

These are the reasons why umpires worry about the quality of the fields.

- Training

Rick Morris reported that it appeared training again this year would not be held at the Community College of Baltimore County, Catonsville. The Catonsville Athletic Director informed Rick that there would be no indoor games either this winter.

A question was asked that if an umpire took training for a high-school organization, could that be sufficient for SUM. Rick stated that it was too soon to decide that. However, if high-school training could substitute for the SUM training, the umpire should at least attend one or two SUM sessions just to meet SUM umpires.

- Umpire in Chief Protocol

This topic related to whether Umpires in Chiefs (UICs) received any formal training. This was related to a tournament where an umpire felt the UIC was not supportive when some concerns

were raised by coaches. It was recommended that consideration be given to developing a UIC manual. Plus, at least a short training class annually could be held and new UICs could have an apprenticeship with more experienced UICs before they are given independent assignments.

- Other Topics

An additional topic discussed at the meeting was the overlap of members on the UAT and the newly formed SUM Executive Committee (EC). At the initial EC meeting, a discussion was held about the fact that there were three members on both the UAT and EC. It was suggested that at least one of those members could limit participation to just the EC.

The UAT agreed that one of the three overlapping members should leave that UAT. However, it was also noted that having joint membership on both was a benefit. Dual participation ensures that members of both groups know what is happening; helps avoid duplication; and provides the UAT a way to report to all umpires on topics of interest discussed at the EC.

John Calamari agreed to leave the UAT.

- Actions

No actions were identified at the meeting.

Attachment 1 Actions

| Status of UAT Open Items | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------|---------------|---|
| Meeting | Open Item | Assignment | Status | Final Disposition |
| Aug 23, 2021 | Consider a Facebook page for equipment exchange | Holonich | Open | |
| Aug 23, 2021 | Confirm new member | Richter | Close | Joanne Brickwedde has joined the UAT |
| Apr 19, 2021 | New pictures for UAT members | Morris | Closed | New pictures have collage has been developed |
| Apr 19, 2021 | UAT members provide individual pictures | All | Closed | UAT members have provided pictures. |
| Apr 19, 2021 | Discuss adopt an umpire program with Dye | Richter | Closed | John Dye likes the idea but is not sure how to implement. |
| Nov 11, 2020 | Investigate with John Dye if direct deposit is an option | Richter | Closed | John Dye had investigated this in the past. It is not cost effective. |
| Nov 11, 2020 | Keep the UAT summary on the SUM website current and ensuring distribution of the summary | Richter | Closed | Summaries are being distributed and there is a link on the homepage |

Attachment 2 Lessons Learned Topics

| Lesson Learned Topics From 2021 Fall Season | | | |
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| Topic | Background | Issue | UAT Disposition |
| "C" Ball | <p>There are numerous C teams playing in tournaments.</p> <p>In open tournaments, these C teams often are less competitive than A or B teams. This causes many better teams to avoid USSSA tournaments because of the lower competition level. Consideration should be given to restructuring tournaments to only allow A and B teams in higher level tournaments.</p> | What can be done to keep open tournaments more competitive? | This is a decision of USSSA East and the UAT has no recommendation. |
| Consider making higher seed mandatory home team on Sunday. | Virginia tournaments automatically make the higher seed home on Sundays. | If the higher seed chooses away it can prolong the game by giving the weaker team the opportunity to bat when the likelihood the weaker team will be behind. | The UAT believes allowing the higher seed to select home or visitor should remain. |
| Inquire with umpires if they would work more games in a row. | Staffing is short and there is a need for umpires. Some umpires are considering moving to VA given the quality of ball and fields. | Some umpires would prefer four, five or more games in a row and be done instead of getting four games over six time slots. This would give the umpires a more compact schedule and the potential for more games. | Although this may work well in early spring and fall, the heat in summer could be a health issue. Plus, umpires may lobby to work the morning games. The UAT recommends keeping the current rotation practice of SUM. |
| Work with counties to improve fields. | Teams often complain to the umpires about the field quality. Umpires do not control the quality of the fields, nor can they call a game if they believe the | On many fields the pitching area and batter boxes are ground into a fine dust that makes performing difficult. | Can USSSA East explore working with park departments to get some stronger material for heavily used areas like at the pitching plate and righthand |

Lesson Learned Topics From 2021 Fall Season

| Topic | Background | Issue | UAT Disposition |
|--------------|--|--------------|---|
| | <p>field quality could result in an injury. However, the umpire could be held liable if a player is injured on a poor-quality field. Virginia tournaments have better quality fields and are taking teams from Maryland.</p> | | <p>batter's box like clay bricks? Also, could sites be provided with a way to carry water to the fields, like a tank on the carts, where they could wet and pack heavily used areas? USSSA East may investigate what the University of Maryland does on its field to keep it solid.</p> <p>Some discussion should be held about the authority of umpires to stop games if they feel the field is unsafe regardless of what the site director decides.</p> |