

## **Summary of November 21, 2022 Umpire Advisory Team Meeting**

On November 21, 2022, the Umpire Advisory Team (UAT) held its final meeting for the year. UAT members in attendance were Bryan Richter, President, Joe Holonich, Secretary, Damon Williams, Rick Morris, Bill Chatterton, Joann Brickwedde, and Jim Morton.

- Report on Meeting with Andy Wisk on Umpire Abuse

Bryan Richter reported that the meeting with Andy Wisk on coach, parent, and team conduct was delayed until after the end of the season. The plan is to provide Andy Wisk with some information developed by the UAT, included in Attachment 1, to help focus Andy on the need to be more proactive with unruly and aggressive conduct. Additional examples of poor coach behavior were discussed and included in the package for Andy.

The information includes a discussion on the action item, see Attachment 2, related to having a database of repeat offenders. This database would provide Softball Umpires of Maryland (SUM) and the United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA), East with information to show if certain coaches, parents, or teams were repeatedly abusing umpires. It could serve as a basis for corrective actions if patterns were identified.

- Fall Lessons Learned Review and Analysis of All Lessons Learned

Next the UAT discussed the fall season lessons learned provided by umpires. The fall lessons learned are provided in Attachment 3. The consolidation of all lessons learned given to the UAT is provided in Attachment 4. The lessons learned in Attachment 4 are grouped in common concerns and colored for a particular group. The discussions were in the context of both the individual lesson learned from the fall as well as the consolidated lessons learned.

### A. More Efficient Game Endings

A detailed discussion was held on the lesson learned related to looking for ways to make game endings more efficient.

One suggestion made was to consider the flip-flop rule that USSSA slow-pitch uses. In USSSA slow-pitch games, if an inning ends at any time during the game with the visiting team leading by a mercy score, the home team becomes the visiting team by immediately batting a second time, i.e., the teams do not switch at the end of that half inning. This results in the winning team becoming the home team, which helps end the game in a timelier manner.

Concerns were that coaches at times use a strategy of taking visitors to get their players the maximum at bats. Flip flopping the visitor and home teams would uncut this objective. A second concern was that teams who pay to play in USSSA East tournaments might feel the amount of play time they get to play is reduced so they may move to other tournaments.

A second suggestion was to have a drop-dead ending instead of no new inning. This would only be used on Saturdays and would help ensure more timely games. A worry was if the home team was behind by a few runs but did not get its last at bats because of the drop-dead ending. Another worry was if the visiting team had taken the lead in the current inning but the drop-dead caused return to the previous inning, the visiting team would lose.

The third perspective offered was just to continue as is and play the game. It was noted that some games end early while others may take longer. This tends to even out the game times.

There was no consensus on the best approach to end games in a timelier manner. However, the UAT did agree that USSSA East should investigate ways to see what could be done.

#### B. Umpire Pay

The second lesson learned discussed in detail was the need to increase umpire pay. It was noted that there were competing tournaments and recreational leagues that were paying more for umpires. Although these games were done with a single umpire, they were paid in cash.

Examples provided were for a nonaffiliated tournament paying its umpires \$65. Also, umpires were being contacted to work recreational games at \$70 for 75 minutes. Receiving \$70 for 75 minutes was essentially \$1.00 per minute. A 90-minute USSSA game would be \$90 if equivalent pay was received.

A point was made that some umpires are not interested in working alternate opportunities. The reason is these assignments are multiple games, such as four or more in a row over an entire day. The countervailing point was that, even though some umpires do not want to work in this situation, others were.

It was noted that the pool of umpires is a finite number. If umpires who work USSSA are also taking these alternate assignments, it is depleting the pool of available USSSA umpires. The workload for umpires who do USSSA tournaments gets increased because there are not sufficient resources to cover all the USSSA games. This means that USSSA assignments may be more extensive than umpires desire because of some USSSA umpires working elsewhere.

To help improve the potential for umpires to do USSSA tournaments, the UAT recommended that the game fee be increased to \$65 per game. In addition, to account for the possibility of extreme increases in gasoline prices during the season once game fees are set, it was suggested that umpires receive compensation when the average price of gasoline in Maryland goes above a certain amount. This gasoline clause would be implemented based on the average price reported the American Automobile Association.

#### C. Greater Autonomy for Site Directors and Umpires in Chiefs

The third lesson learned discussed in detail related to providing greater autonomy to Site Directors and Umpires in Chiefs (UICs). The concern arose because of excessive heat during a July 2022 tournament. Given the extensive heat, there was a need to shorten games, but USSSA East made no decision. Ultimately, the UIC at the site unilaterally decided to reduce game times from 90 to 75 minutes.

It was noted that the SUM Executive Board had investigated the heat index and had prepared some discussion points to raise with USSSA East. In general, USSSA East has the highest heat index of any sporting organization in Maryland. Attachment 5 is a copy of the information related to heat indices.

Similar concerns have been expressed in the past about rain delays and the ability of the Site Directors and UICs to be able to cancel games at a site. It was noted that given the geographic

spread of complexes, weather and site conditions are not uniform on any given tournament day. Because of that, the decisions about games, whether it be heat or rain or field conditions, should be made at the site and not by an individual in an office miles away from the location.

#### D. Remaining Lessons Learned

For the remaining lessons learned, the discussions were not as extensive. The UAT position on those are provided in Attachment 3. Attachment 6 provides the UAT talking points recommended for the annual SUM/USSSA East meeting based on those lessons learned that have a common theme.

##### - Review of Action Items

There was not a significant discussion of the action items. As noted earlier, the action item related to developing a database to track unruly coaches, parents, and teams was discussed as part of the preparation of information to be provided to Andy Wisk. No other status changes were reported.

Two new action items were:

1. Rick Morris will talk to John Dye about updating the SUM mechanics manual.
2. If John Dye agrees, Joe Holonich will look to identify a volunteer who would be willing to prepare guidance for UICs on three-man mechanics and interacting with umpires in championship games.

##### - Next UAT Meeting

The proposed date for the next UAT meeting was generally discussed. It was recommended that the next meeting be held before the start of 2023 training. Rick Morris reported that training would begin on January 28, 2023 and would again be held at Catonsville. The UAT agreed to identify a date for the next meeting sometime in December.

## **Attachment 1**

### **Concerns Related to Coach and Parental Behavior**

- Each year it seems parents and coaches become more argumentative and difficult
- Umpires have raised a concern about coach and parental behavior to the Umpire Advisory Team multiple times this past season
- At the pregame conference, umpires are now emphasizing with coaches that they are responsible for behavior of all individuals associated with the team (coaches, parents, and player)
- Multiple situations have been experienced at various complexes with various teams
- Examples include:
  - An entire parent section had to be ejected due to inappropriate behavior
  - Coaches at one game nearly came to blows
  - An ejected coach refused to leave the bench after he was ejected
  - A second situation was where an ejected coach continued to abuse the umpire
  - Ejected coaches were allowed to return to the field before the ejection was fulfilled
  - Coaches on their own returned to the field before the ejection was fulfilled and were argumentative when told an ejection covered two games
- SUM umpires are of the opinion that USSSA East does not support them. For example:
  - In one instance, the Site Director returned the protest fee
  - Umpires do not see that teams with organizations that are repeatedly disciplined suffer any consequences
- Recently in Texas a football official was shot and killed at a nine-year-old football game. SUM umpires worry that if USSSA East does not set a tone of not tolerating inappropriate behavior from coaches, coaches could escalate bad behavior.
- In Baltimore city, two football coaches got in a fight after the game. Although this is not softball, it does show that violence is becoming more and more prevalent in youth sports. Both high schools were suspended for a game.
- Montgomery County had a fight at a football game. Coaches were punched, fans rushed on the field, and the incident continued outside the stadium where knives were present.
- This past 2022 Spring/Summer season, SUM lost five umpires in three weeks due to coach and parent behavior
- Recommendations for consideration by SUM and USSSA East
  - SUM will work with its umpires to help umpires deal with stressful situations with coaches and parents. Some actions include 1) providing guidance at the annual meeting, 2) emphasizing the approach throughout the season through the Weekly Points of Emphasis, and 3) identifying articles that provide information on how to handle these situations. In addition, SUM will look to institutionalize guidance on to help umpires know when and how to address parental behavior.
  - The UAT has identified several recommendations for USSSA East. These include: 1) if a coach is ejected at a tournament, email the coach immediately after the tournament and remind them that unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated. USSSA East should develop a database to track reports of inappropriate behavior and ejections, if an organization has multiple ejections, consider removing them from tournaments for the remainder of the year, 3) work with Site Directors to help them

understand that allowing coaches to not fulfill their ejection or returning protest fees undercuts the umpires authority and should not be done, and 4) if a coach is repeatedly identified as unruly or having multiple ejections, they should be informed that their team is welcome in the tournaments but they can no longer coach.

- Andy Wish and Bill Dowell, plus whoever else they would like, should attend the November 21, 2022, UAT meeting to hear from the UAT firsthand.

Attachment: Applicable Sections from the June 6, 2022, and August 22, 2022, UAT Summaries

### **Applicable UAT Summary Sections**

#### June 6, 2022, UAT Meeting Summary

One concern raised at this UAT meeting was Site Directors allowing ejected coaches to return to games before their ejection as fulfilled. In addition, another concern was Site Directors returning the money paid for protests. The UAT felt that these actions undercut the authority of the umpires on the field and send a message to the coaches that there were no consequences for bad behavior or lost appeals.

Second, the UAT discussed how United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA), East should be compiling a list of coaches who have had repeated ejections or disciplinary actions against them. This list should serve as a basis to tell a coach that, although their team is welcome at USSSA, East tournaments, that coach is no longer permitted to be a coach for that team.

A point of emphasis was made of a recent event where the brother of an ex-professional football player fatally shot the coach of a seven-year-old team. The shooting apparently happened during an argument between one of the coaching staffs and the officiating crew. It happened in front of nine-year-old children. The concern of the UAT was if bad behavior was allowed without consequences, things could escalate.

There was a recommendation that Andy and Bill be invited to attend a future UAT meeting. The benefit would be for them to hear directly from the UAT about umpire concerns. Conversely, the UAT could also hear from them on their perspective of things.

At one game this spring, the coach protested the call. The team paid the \$100 and was informed the call was correct. After collecting the \$100 protest fee, the Site Director returned the money to the team. The reason for the return was that the call could not be protested. It was uncertain if the Site Director unilaterally decided to return the money or if USSSA directed to return it.

UAT members worried that if teams protest and then the protest fee is returned, it could set a bad example. By not honoring the protest process, the UAT felt umpire authority was being undercut. It was noted you get the behavior you reward and by returning protest fees, you would encourage coaches to protest more frequently. This could lead to more trivial protests that will needlessly delay games.

It was agreed that an action from the meeting was for John Dye to discuss the need to keep protest fees with USSSA management.

## August 22, 2022, UAT Meeting Summary

There was consistent agreement among all the UAT members that abusive language and behavior from coaches and parents is becoming a problem. The view was umpires are at a tipping point. In the past few weeks, several umpires have quit because of treatment by coaches.

A recent example was excessively inappropriate language a coach used during a game. The coach was ejected but continued to be abusive toward the umpire. The coach returned to the confines of the field for the next game even though the ejection was for that game also. The umpire told the coach he had to leave the field completely.

The UAT members offered that some teams may have to be excluded from USSSA tournaments if poor coach and parent behavior continued. It was agreed that not all umpires handle these situations well. The UAT members all concurred that the situation needs to be addressed before it gets out of hand.

It was noted that the Umpire in Chief (UIC) will document this behavior in their weekly reports. However, the UAT members were not sure if any action was taken by USSSA because of these reports. The UAT recommended that USSSA have a database of teams and if a team or organization were identified as repeat offenders, they be banned from USSSA tournaments.

Also, UAT members agreed that umpires need to know the procedure for ejecting a parent. Although the USSSA rule book has a provision for ejecting parents, the UAT noted that there was no defined procedure on how exactly to eject a problem parent. The UAT would seek guidance from John Dye on how to handle unruly parents.

In the end it was agreed that the umpires felt they visible support shown when coaches or parents exhibit abusive behavior. Needed more support when dealing with unruly coaches and parents. The UAT felt that there was support for umpires but there needs to be more

## Attachment 2: Umpire Advisory Team Action Items

Meeting	Open Item	Assignment	Status	Final Disposition
Nov 21, 2022	Rick Morris will talk to John Dye about updating the SUM mechanics manual.	Morris	Open	
Nov 21, 2022	If John Dye agrees, Joe Holonich will look to identify a volunteer who would be willing to prepare guidance for UICs on three-man mechanics and interacting with umpires in championship games.	Holonich	Open	
Jun 6, 2022	Obtain guidance from John Dye, working with USSSA, on how to handle loud and inappropriate music at complexes.	Ritcher	Open	
Jun 6, 2022	Work with John Dye to ensure USSSA does not return protest fees.	Ritcher	Open	
Jun 6, 2022	See if USSSA has a database of teams with unsportsmanlike conduct issues. If not, advocate that USSSA develop such a database so repeat offenders can be identified and excluded from USSSA tournaments.	Ritcher	Open	
Jun 6, 2022	Get additional detail beyond the rule book from John Dye on how to handle unruly parents and include it in a continuing learning discussion.	Morris	Open	
Jun 6, 2022	Include three umpire mechanics in a continuing learning discussion, with approval from John Dye.	Morris	Open	
Jun 6, 2022	Coordinate with John Dye on getting a website designer to improve the professionalism of the SUM website.	Ritcher	Open	
Jun 6, 2022	Publish guidance from John Dye on how to handle illegal pitches and include that in a continuing learning discussion.	Morris	Closed	Illegal pitching will not be addressed.
Jun 6, 2022	Receive approval from John Dye to implement the continuing learning discussions.	Morris	Closed	Discussions have been included in SUMmary.
Mar 7, 2022	Get help on equipment exchange page if needed	Holonich	Closed	Not needed. Page opened.
Mar 7, 2022	Talk with John Dye about mentoring Program	Morris	Closed	Mentoring in place
Mar 7, 2022	Complete list of potential mentors	Holonich	Closed	Emailed Mar 16, 2022
Mar 7, 2022	Contact UAT replacement	Holonich	Closed	Jim Morton was contacted
Aug 23, 2021	Confirm new member	Richter	Closed	Joanne Brickwedde has joined the UAT

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<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Open Item</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Final Disposition</b>
Aug 23, 2021	Consider a Facebook page for equipment exchange	Holonich	Closed	Page developed and opened.
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 3: 2022 Fall Season Topics

Topic	Issue	UAT Disposition
Wrong home team has a mercy lead	Mainly on Saturday but somewhat possible on Sundays, the weaker teams could be the home team. At times, the home team is behind by a mercy run score. If the timer sounds with the visiting team at bat and leading by a mercy run score, to end the game, the home team, losing by a mercy score must still bat.	USSSA should investigate options to improve the timeliness of games. Several UAT suggestions included using the flip flop rule used in USSSA slow-pitch tournaments or making the time limit drop dead. Also, keeping the status quo was discussed.
Umpire pay needs to be increased substantially	SUM is losing umpires to other tournaments in both Maryland and Virginia due to pay. For example, several unaffiliated tournaments in Maryland are paying umpires a cash fee of \$65 or more. Plus, some recreational leagues in Maryland are paying \$70 for a 75 minute no new inning. That is approximately \$1 per minute so a 90-minute game would pay \$90. In addition, the extreme rate of inflation and the high costs of gasoline has made the current pay less.	Game fees should be raised to a minimum of \$65. In addition, a clause should be added to the contract that if the average price of gasoline in Maryland as reported by the AAA goes above a certain amount, say \$4.00 per gallon, a \$10 travel fee will be added to each umpires pay each day they report to a complex. The fee will be paid even if the games at that complex are cancelled. Once the travel fee is implemented, it will remain in effect until the end of that season, spring/summer or fall.
More authority for the Site Director and UIC to determine when to use the heat index	Heat Index policy, heat index is easily available on weather apps. Seems this year on-site staff needed to wait for the USSSA office to use the policy.	USSSA should make the decision on all site conditions, heat, rain, field conditions the responsibility of the Site Director in consultation with the UIC.
UICs should have extra water available for umpires when temperatures are above 90.	I have not run out and have also given others water/Gatorade. Some sites do not have concessions or have concessions that close before last game.	Umpires should be responsible for ensuring they have sufficient water available.
Include a senior umpire on all championship games	Need to try to have 1 umpire on these games that can control things when rotations/chases are missed and can adapt on the fly. Availability may be an issue.	Umpire availability may limit what umpires can be scheduled. The UAT agrees that the senior umpire assigned to championship games should have more than two or three years of experience.

### Attachment 3: 2022 Fall Season Topics

Topic	Issue	UAT Disposition
More training is needed.	Schedule more training sessions for umpires that are willing to learn. Need multiple sessions throughout the year in order to keep these mechanics fresh in the umpires' minds. Remember...practice makes perfect!	Training sessions during the season would not be feasible given people are at tournaments on weekends and many umpires still work during the week. The Points of Emphasis included in the SUMmary could include mechanics in some discussions. During the season, senior umpires are always willing to work with umpires and hold discussions. Consider providing guidance on how to approach a new person and provide feedback in a positive manner. Could UICs offer a paid class with a few people during the off season?
Update training syllabus	With regards to training, develop an updated syllabus with basic positioning, chases, rotations. The websites are somewhat helpful, but if someone from our organization develops one, our group might be more inclined to use it.	There is a hodgepodge of mechanic's manuals. Rick Morris will talk to John Dye about revising the SUM manual. Also looking at a training session on mechanics.
Improve communication before and after championship games.	Pregame and post game discussions, this is a big thing we are missing. Too many times after a championship game, the conversation usually goes...."good game...see you next weekend". However there are many times where tough conversations need to be had between the umpires and the uic's (sic) over missed calls, rotations, positioning. We are here to get better and understand why we are missing these.	Because of different championship games on multiple fields at a complex, it is difficult for a UIC to watch all fields to the extent needed to provide quality feedback. However, this is a good point to include in a UIC manual. UICs should provide some feedback regardless of how well the crew performed.
Expand UIC training to include three-man mechanics	UIC training in 3 man mechanics also needs to be addressed as well. I can honestly tell you most of our UIC's are not in tune with current 3 man mechanics and how to have	Agree that there is inconsistency of how UIC operate in three-man mechanics. The UAT agrees some guidance would be useful to both UICs and umpires in general. A

**Attachment 3: 2022 Fall Season Topics**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>UAT Disposition</b>
	discussions with umpires on their performance on the field.	volunteer should be identified who would be willing to do this.

### Attachment 4: All Lessons Learned

Item	Details	Recommendation
<b>Umpire Scheduling</b>		
People from out of state get more games including championship games.	Umpires from out of state are often given more games and championships while SUM umpires are left with fewer games. As the weekend progresses, there are fewer umpires needed but out of state umpires get games while SUM umpires are sent home.	<p>Recommendation from concerned individual was use SUM umpires for championship game.</p> <p>UAT perspective is the additional games for out of state umpires are a benefit to help compensate for their agreeing to travel and help cover our games.</p>
Inquire with umpires if they would work more games in a row.	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.
Include a senior umpire on all championship games	Need to try to have 1 umpire on these games that can control things when rotations/chases are missed and can adapt on the fly. Availability may be an issue.	Umpire availability may limit what umpires can be scheduled. The UAT agrees that the senior umpire assigned to championship games should have more than two or three years of experience.
<b>Umpire Pay</b>		
Payment for rain delays	Umpires are paid for their time. Some schedules already require umpires to be at the complex over six game slots to work four games. During weather delays umpires can sit for multiple hours until a decision is made.	Give greater autonomy to the Site Director and Umpire in Chief to cancel games. To would allow decisions to be made at the actual complex. If greater autonomy is not provided and extensive time is taken to make fields playable, pay a wait fee of one game fee whenever an umpire waits more than an hour in a rain delay.

### Attachment 4: All Lessons Learned

Item	Details	Recommendation
Umpire pay needs to be increased substantially	SUM is losing umpires to other tournaments in both Maryland and Virginia due to pay. For example, several unaffiliated tournaments in Maryland are paying umpires a cash fee of \$65. Plus, some recreational leagues in Maryland are paying \$70 for a 75 minute no new inning. That is approximately \$1 per minute so a 90-minute game would pay \$90. In addition, the extreme rate of inflation and the high costs of gasoline has made the current pay less.	Game fees should be raised to a minimum of \$65. In addition, a clause should be added to the contract that if the average price of gasoline in Maryland as reported by the AAA goes above a certain amount, say \$4.00 per gallon, a \$10 travel fee will be added to each umpires pay each day they report to a complex. If the umpire arrives at the complex but the games are ultimately cancelled, the fee will be paid even if the games at that complex are cancelled. Once the travel fee is implemented, it will remain in effect until the end of that season, spring/summer or fall.
<b>Game Timeliness</b>		
Game ending procedure for Recreational All Stars.	Previously the five-run limit extended to the third inning for Recreational All Stars. It has now been changed to the second inning. At times, this will result in the unlimited inning starting with just a few minutes left on the clock and taking some time to complete, going well past the scheduled game time. Given RAS games are in July, the extended times over multiple games contribute to heat issues for umpires.	Return to the five-run limit through the third inning. In addition, set an absolute game time. If after the five-run inning is complete and there are 15 minutes or less on the clock, each team gets 10 minutes to bat in the unlimited inning. The offensive half of the inning for each team is over at 10 minutes regardless of the number of outs. An efficient half inning usually takes approximately 7 minutes so providing 10 minutes gives additional time.
Consider making higher seed mandatory home team on Sunday.	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	The UAT believes allowing the higher seed to select home or visitor should remain.

### Attachment 4: All Lessons Learned

Item	Details	Recommendation
	behind. Virginia tournaments automatically make the higher seed home on Sundays.	
Wrong home team has a mercy lead	Mainly on Saturday but somewhat possible on Sundays, the weaker teams could be the home team. At times, the home team is behind by a mercy run score. If the timer sounds with the visiting team at bat and leading by a mercy run score, to end the game, the home team, losing by a mercy score must still bat.	USSSA should investigate options to improve the timeliness of games. Several UAT suggestions included using the flip flop rule used in USSSA slow-pitch tournaments or making the time limit drop dead. Also, keeping the status quo was discussed.
Game schedules still have teams playing back-to-back games moving from field to field and delaying multiple fields.	There are still games being scheduled where a team moves from a field at a distance and delays two fields. Attached schedule is an example.	Work with USSSA East to ensure that if a team moves to another field, they will have a break to make the move. An effort should be made by USSSA East to look at the final schedules to see if changes can be made to the schedule to improve efficiency. Although the schedule may be computer generated a human review will help improve the efficiency. Note: Following the meeting it was reported that the schedules are not computer generated.
<b>Umpire Professionalism and Performance</b>		
Umpire arrival time and game start time.	Some umpires arrive extremely late for games, often not being ready for game times. Also, in some situations, the plate umpire will remain in the camp and wait for the plate umpire to return. These can delay the start of games on time.	Discuss the need to be timely at the annual meeting, in SUMmary, and occasionally in the Morris weekly Points of Emphasis. Umpires should be reminded to arrive at complexes at least 45 minutes before their scheduled games.
Not enough umpires take their professionalism to heart. Is there an	Umpires take the field looking unkept. Others perform antics or provide	Continue the approach of covering professionalism at the annual meeting.

### Attachment 4: All Lessons Learned

Item	Details	Recommendation
<p>emphasis to implement more professionalism? Are people held accountable for their performance and appearance?</p>	<p>superfluous and unnecessary comments that may seem funny at first but can wear on parents, players, and coaches as the game progresses.</p>	<p>Routinely emphasize professionalism in SUMmary and the Morris weekly Points of Emphasis. Provide guidance to UICs on whether an unprofessional umpire can be sent home.</p>
<p>Improve evaluation process</p>	<p>If there is an evaluation process, it does not seem to be effective. If Umpires in Chiefs are supposed to provide an evaluation at the end of each tournament, some are not seen at the fields, so It is questionable if they are conducting needed observations. Also, some umpires are officiating above their ability which can lead one to conclude the evaluation process is not working or not being used in assignments.</p>	<p>Recommendation from concerned individual was to form a committee of experience umpires to evaluate their partners each week. This is done in some NCAA sports and works very well. Some evaluations questions could include knowledge of rules, application of rules, appearance, hustle, and demeanor. Each area would get a score of 1-5 with 25 being a perfect score.</p> <p>UAT understands that the Umpires in Chiefs provide input on performance. However, there is no visibility of how it is used. Plus, given the lack of available umpires, there may be times when umpires are assigned to games above their skill level.</p>
<p>More training is needed</p>	<p>Schedule more training sessions for umpires that are willing to learn. Need multiple sessions throughout the year in order to keep these mechanics fresh in the umpire's minds. Remember...practice makes perfect!</p>	<p>Training sessions during the season would not be feasible given people are at tournaments on weekends and many umpires still work during the week. The Points of Emphasis included in the SUMmary could include mechanics in some discussions. During the season, senior umpires are always willing to work with umpires and hold discussions. Consider providing</p>

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Item	Details	Recommendation
		guidance on how to approach a new person and provide feedback in a positive manner. Could UICs offer a paid class with a few people during the off season?
Update training syllabus	With regards to training, develop an updated syllabus with basic positioning, chases, rotations. The websites are somewhat helpful, but if someone from our organization develops one, our group might be more inclined to use it.	There is a hodgepodge of mechanic's manuals. Rick Morris will talk to John Dye about revising the SUM manual. Also looking at a training session on mechanics.
Improve communication before and after championship games.	Pregame and post-game discussions, this is a big thing we are missing. Too many times after a championship game, the conversation usually goes...."good game...see you next weekend". However, there are many times where tough conversations need to be had between the umpires and the uic's (sic) over missed calls, rotations, positioning. We are here to get better and understand why we are missing these.	Because of different championship games on multiple fields at a complex, it is difficult for a UIC to watch all fields to the extent needed to provide quality feedback. However, this is a good point to include in a UIC manual. UICs should provide some feedback regardless of how well the crew performed.
Expand UIC training to include three-man mechanics	UIC training in 3-man mechanics also needs to be addressed as well. I can honestly tell you most of our UIC's are not in tune with current 3-man mechanics and how to have discussions with umpires on their performance on the field.	Agree that there is inconsistency of how UIC operate in three-man mechanics. The UAT agrees some guidance would be useful to both UICs and umpires in general. A volunteer should be identified who would be willing to do this.
<b>Site Director and UIC Autonomy</b>		
Site Directors need more autonomy in weather conditions	Site Directors and UICs should have more autonomy in cancelling games due to weather conditions. Currently	USSSA should make the decision on all site conditions, heat, rain, field



### Attachment 4: All Lessons Learned

Item	Details	Recommendation
	they cannot make the decision without consulting USSSA East whose staff is not physically at the complex and do not know the field conditions first hand.	conditions the responsibility of the Site Director in consultation with the UIC.
More authority for the Site Director and UIC to determine when to use the heat index	Heat Index policy, heat index is easily available on weather apps. Seems this year on-site staff needed to wait of USSSA office to use the policy.	
Coaches wearing hats backwards	Some coaches wear their hats backwards. What is the policy?	Provide guidance on whether a coach wearing a hat backwards is permissible. If not, provide the reason so coaches can get an explanation.
Continued abusive coaches and parents	Still coaches are arguing calls, including balls and strikes.	Have USSSA include in every tournament email that coaches need to set a standard and ensure all people associated with a team behave in a sportsmanlike manner. In addition, provide guidance to SUM umpires on how to handle situations. For example, are we responsible for addressing parent behavior? Also, have USSSA East maintain a database of ejected coaches. If coaches have multiple ejections, prohibit them from coaching a team.
"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</p>	This is a decision of USSSA East and the UAT has no recommendation.

### Attachment 4: All Lessons Learned

Item	Details	Recommendation
	restructuring tournaments to only allow A and B teams in higher level tournaments.	
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 field quality could result in an injury. However, the umpire could be held liable if a player is injured on a poor-quality field. 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 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.
Lack of responsiveness to umpire issues	Over the past few years, umpires have provided lessons learned. It appears that the lessons learned provided by umpires do not get addressed. Multiple topics have been raised but there does not seem to be any actions to address the issues identified by umpires or documented closure of the issue. The UAT does not want to be seen as taking concerns but not reporting back to the umpires on how they were closed. It could affect the credibility of the UAT.	SUM needs to take a stronger negotiating position at the end-of-year meeting with USSSA to advocate for the umpires and Umpires in Chief.
UICs should have extra water available for umpires when temperatures are above 90.	I have not run out and have also given others water/Gatorade. Some sites do not have concessions or have concessions that close before last game.	Umpires should be responsible for ensuring they have sufficient water available.

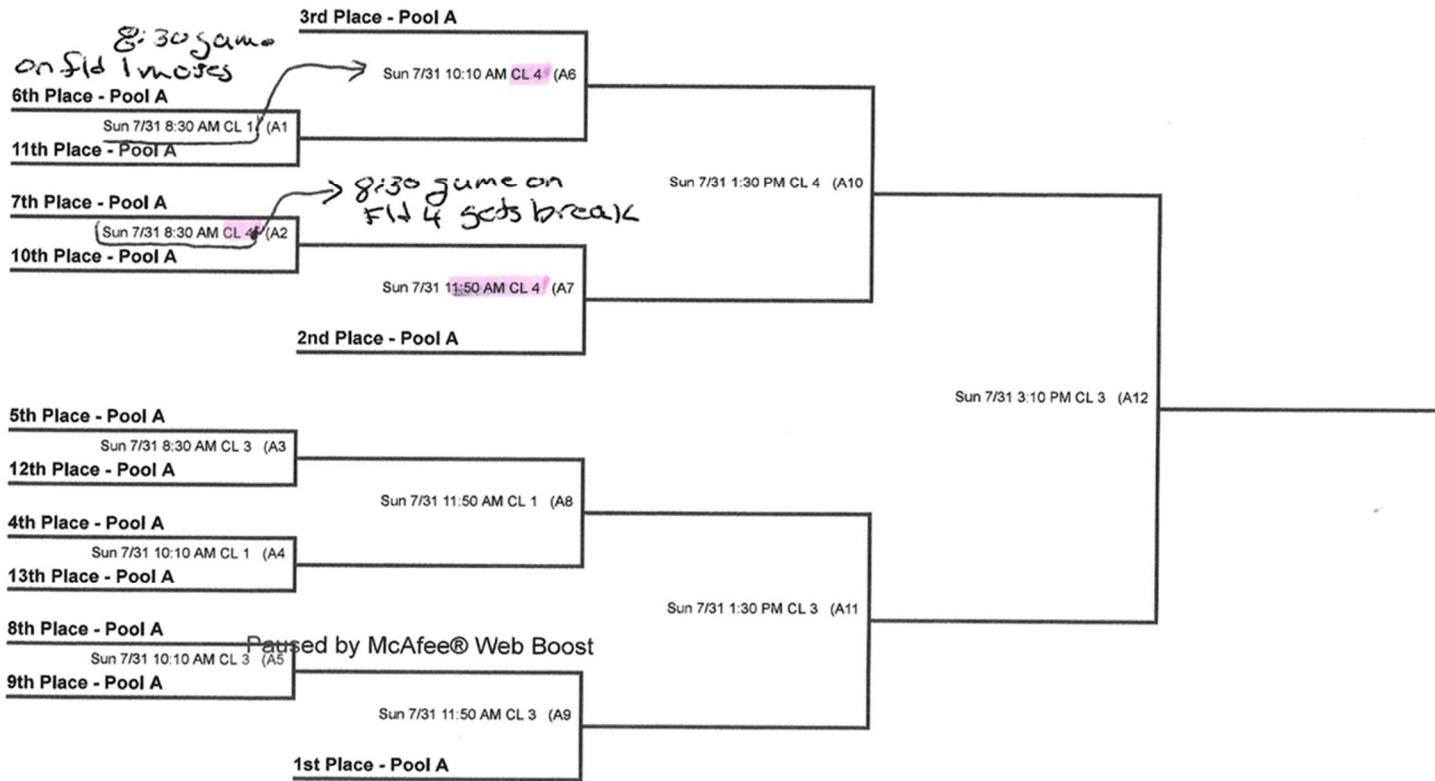


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# BRING THE HEAT - C/REC AS ONLY

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## Attachment 5 Comparison of Heat Indices

- Maryland Public Schools, Division of Early Childhood has a "[Child Care Weather Watch](#)."
- The Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association has provided a [model policy](#) to schools.
- The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) has a [heat index chart and guidance](#) on sport activities.
- Public school systems in Central Maryland have adopted the MPSSAA model policy and the DJS guidelines, greater than 104°, on when sports activities should be stopped.
- USSSA East has the highest heat index when compared to other organizations, except Howard parks.
- The USSSA East extreme heat index is 10° greater than that for OSHA.
- The heat index used by public schools in Central Maryland to stop sports activities sets a lower heat index, 11° lower, than USSSA East.
- The following table shows the comparison.

Heat Index Comparison				
Entity	Lower	Moderate	High	Extreme
USSSA East	80° to 89°	90° to 104°	105° to 114°	Greater than 115°
OHSA	Less than 91°	91° to 103°	103° to 115°	Greater than 105°
MD Public Schools	Less than 90°	90° to 103°		100° to 137°
Howard Parks	84° to 93°	Greater than 94°	Greater than 105°	115°
Howard Schools	Student handbook states staff will monitor heat index readings and apply necessary modifications to practices and games.			
Juvenile Services	Less than 95°	95° to 99°	100° to 104°	Greater than 104°
Montgomery	Less than 85°	85° to 94°	95° to 104°	Greater than 104°
Carroll	Less than 83°	84° to 94°	95° to 104°	Greater than 104°
Anne Arundel	Less than 95°	95° to 99°	100° to 104°	Greater than 104°
Frederick	Less than 95°	N/A	95° to 104°	Greater than 104°

The National Weather Service webpage [Heat Safety Tips and Resources](#) states the following:

- **Young children and infants are particularly vulnerable to heat-related illness and death, as their bodies are less able to adapt to heat than are adults.**
- **Older adults**, particularly those with pre existing (sic) diseases, take certain medications, are living alone or with limited mobility who are exposed to extreme heat can experience multiple adverse effects.
- **People with chronic medical conditions** are more likely to have a serious health problem during a heat wave than healthy people.

Tournament participants and umpires fall in these situations.

Recommendations:

- USSSA East should adopt the heat index temperatures used by the public-school systems in Central Maryland.
  - Game times should be reduced to an hour. If the heat index is above 100°
  - Games should be cancelled when the heat index is greater than 104°

- Recreational All Star and 10UC games should adopt a game-ending procedure, for games not covered by the first bullet, that ensures a timely completion of games. After the two, five-run innings, if 15 minutes or less is on the timer, each team should get 15 minutes to bat. The 15 minutes is drop dead. If the home team is leading, it will not get its 15 minutes at bat. This will help limit the amount of time players and umpires are exposed to the heat.

## **Attachment 6**

### **Background for USSSA East Annual Meeting**

#### **A. Umpire Pay**

1. Current USSSA Pay is \$55 for a maximum of no new inning after 90 minutes
2. Some unaffiliated tournaments are paying \$70 cash with varying game time limits.
3. Recreational leagues in Carrol County often send emails looking for umpires with pay at \$70 cash for no new inning after 75 minutes. This equates to approximately \$1.00 per minute. If USSSA paid the same rate, the game fee would be \$90.
4. Although these games are usually a single umpire, they are taking umpires from a limited pool of available people. This depletes the number of umpires who can work USSSA games and increases the number of games umpires willing to work USSSA tournaments must cover.
5. Inflation, including gasoline prices, has dramatically increased in the past year.
6. As discussed in Item C, "Greater Autonomy for Site Directors and Umpires in Chiefs," often umpires are left sitting for hours when a weather delay occurs.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Increase umpire pay to a minimum of \$65 per game in 2023
2. Include a gasoline price increase clause that would take effect if the average price of gasoline in Maryland per the American Automotive Association was \$4.00 per gallon or more. An additional \$10 per day would be paid if the clause was in effect. Once in effect, the clause would remain in effect until the end of 2023. An alternative could be to increase the game fee by \$2 if the gas price threshold was reached.
3. If USSSA East will not give Site Directors and Umpires and Chiefs (UICs) more autonomy to make timelier decisions to cancel games at complexes, see Item C, and leaves umpires sitting for hours for the resumption of games, at least a one game fee should be paid if the wait exceeds 90 minutes.

#### **B. Game Timeliness**

1. Often teams switch fields immediately at the next game. If that team's game went long, it impacts the schedule for that field and the next field. For example, a Sunday schedule at Cedar Lane in July had a team moving from Field 1 to Field 4 for its next game which was immediately following. The winner of the first game on Field 4 did not play until the third game of the day on Field 4. The delay in the team moving from Field 1 to Field 4, delayed Field 4 and eventually the championship game on Field 3. A simple change in one game would have avoided this. Had the winner of the first game on Field 4 played the next game on Field 4, it would have allowed the team from Field 1 to move to Field 4 and avoided delaying two fields. It was a simple fix that was easily identified if USSSA East staff did some quality control of the schedule. See the attached schedule.
2. Teams in Recreational All Star (RAS) and "C" games frequently have trouble getting three outs. An 18U C elimination game at Fairland in July took 90 minutes with only five outs. The first inning could not even be completed.
3. Mainly on Saturdays but sometimes on Sundays, the weaker team could be the home team. In this situation, if the clock sounds and the visiting team is ahead, you must complete the visiting team, that is winning, at bat and the home team, that is losing, at bat in the bottom of the inning, delaying the game end and thus the following game. If teams move fields, it could also impact other fields.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. USSSA should investigate what can be done to help ensure a timelier end to games. Some suggestions were use the flip-flop rule in place for USSSA slow-pitch tournaments or make the time limit drop dead.
2. For RAS, return to the five-run limit through the third inning. For both RAS and C games, set an absolute time for teams to bat if there is 15 minutes or less on the game clock when an inning begins. Under this scenario, when the new inning starts with 15 minutes or less on the game clock, each team would get 10 minutes, drop dead to bat. Once the 10-minute interval was reached, that half inning would end regardless of the number of outs or the count on the batter.
3. USSSA East should put some effort in quality assuring schedules to make sure games are scheduled in the most efficient and timely manner. USSSA staff should review all schedules before they are published to identify changes that should be made to avoid teams changing fields and delaying games on all fields and improve the efficiency of game times. An efficient half inning usually takes approximately 7 minutes so providing 10 minutes gives additional time.

#### C. Greater Autonomy for Site Directors and Umpires in Chiefs

1. Often rain affects a complex and makes conditions problematic. However, before a site can be closed, it appears that permission is needed from USSSA East.
2. Because the USSSA East staff are not at the complex, guidance may often be given that radar shows the rain ending. Then teams and staff at the site must wait, sometimes for extended periods of time. Umpires are not paid for this wait time which could extend a 12-hour day to 14, 15, or 16 hours.
3. Similarly, the heat index is easily available on weather applications. Like rain situations, Site Directors and UICs cannot unilaterally make decisions about shortening game times due to heat.

#### Recommendation:

1. Give the Site Director and UIC more autonomy to decide if a complex should be closed due to weather or games shortened due to heat. They are the ones at the site and have first-hand knowledge of the conditions.
2. Include a clause in the contract that the ultimate authority to decide on canceling games due to weather conditions rests with the UIC. This is needed because the umpires from Softball Umpires of Maryland are ultimately responsible for the field once a game begins. If USSSA East pushes to play games, it could expose umpires to a liability.

#### D. Field Conditions

1. Teams often complain about field quality. One of the biggest concerns is the area around the pitching plate and the right-handed batter's box. These get extensive wear through the season and even on just a single day.
2. Although umpires do not control the field maintenance, they have the authority to end a game if they believe the field is unsafe. However, the umpire is often pushed to allow play to continue even if a coach may feel some areas of a field are unsafe.

#### Recommendation:

1. Require county staff to perform better maintenance of fields during games. Water should be available to moisten soil so it can be repacked occasionally during the day. A contract provision should be included in the contracts for 2023.
2. Agree to allow umpires and UIC to call a game if field conditions, whether due to weather or field degradation, warrant. If a game on a field is called due to detrimental field conditions, the umpires should be paid as if the games were forfeited.