

Summary of June 12, 2023 Umpire Advisory Team Meeting

On June 12, 2023, the Umpire Advisory Team (UAT) held its mid-season meeting for the 2023 Spring/Summer season. UAT members in attendance were Bryan Richter, President, Joe Holonich, Secretary, Damon Williams, Rick Morris, Bill Chatterton, Joann Brickwedde, and Jim Morton.

- Topics on Season to Date

The only season topic discussed dealt with whether umpires are responsible for reporting final scores for games. At a recent tournament the Umpire in Chief (UIC) gave sheets to umpires asking them to record the final score of their games.

The UAT agreed that it was not the responsibility of umpires to report scores. The Site Director should get the scores. It was acknowledged that at the Maryland state championship and Eastern Regional Championship in Salisbury, Maryland, umpires are required to report final game scores. All the UAT members agreed, umpires should help the UIC and Site Director and provide the final score if they know it but are not required to do so. However, if Softball Umpires of Maryland (SUM) wants umpires to report scores it should develop a policy and implement it across the board.

- Communication Device at Fields for Safety

Bryan Richter led the discussion by noting that some umpire organizations are now providing two-way radios to umpires. This provides the umpires with a communication device to get help if an emergency or dangerous situation arises. The UAT saw some issues with two-way radios, such as maintaining them and getting them to different sites each week.

However, the UAT thought allowing umpires to take cell phones to the fields could offer the same benefits. It was recognized that some umpires are already taking cell phones to the field. The UAT decided that SUM should develop a policy providing direction to umpires on the use of cell phones. The policy should identify how and when cell phones can be used while on the field.

- When Should Umpires Leave the Field

A SUM member raised a concern about his partner taking a hard hit to the facemask and appearing wobbly and disoriented. The partner talked to the umpire who refused to leave the game. The UIC, standing directly behind the backstop, took no action at all, not even a short trip to check on the umpire. The SUM member felt that the umpire should have been removed from the field given his physical behavior after the hit.

The UAT discussed if the same criteria applied to players should be used for umpires. Another point raised was should the UIC make the decision to pull an umpire from the field. The question then becomes what if the UIC tells the umpire to leave and they refuse.

It was suggested that the only way a UIC could pull an umpire from the field is if remaining on the field was causing problems. Ultimately the UIC must leave it to the individual to tell them what shape the umpire physically is.

No actions were recommended by the UAT.

- **Proposed Rule for Umpire Hit by Thrown Bat**

This concern was raised during the March annual meeting. A suggestion was made to propose a change to the thrown bat rule. The change would eject the player and coach if a thrown bat hits an umpire or others and is deemed serve. The UAT felt that this proposed rule change should not be supported.

- **Appeasement of Umpires and Impacting Others**

Two topics were raised related to SUM appeasing umpires and impacting other umpires or UICs. The first topic discussed was allowing some umpires to only work one-break days. The UAT opened the discussion by noting that John Rimmell is heavily impacted on assigning umpires by the limited number there are. He is balancing the needs of SUM and all umpires to ensure games are covered given the shortage of umpires.

Several umpires have voiced frustration that they are always getting two-break days. This is happening because other umpires will not work two-break days. The umpires do not see this caused by John but rather by selfishness and arrogance of other umpires. These umpires mandate they will not work two-break days and then impose on their peers additional two-break game days.

UAT members agreed that people need to work two-break days and working them was not an issue. Rather the issue was when umpires requesting no two-break days are accommodated, other umpires now must work longer days more often. Although it was recognized that there were three different start times, plate, base, and second game plate, some umpires felt it was unfair and selfish on the part of other umpires to mandate they would not work two-break days.

The UAT questioned why SUM was accommodating umpires who would not work two-break days and penalizing other umpires by giving them more two-break days. To see how pervasive, the concern is, the UAT is asking SUM umpires who feel they are working an excessive number of two-break days to email us at uatumpires@gmail.com.

The second topic dealing with appeasement resulted from an event one Saturday. Two umpires who require that they work together were assigned to the site. They also require that one only gets assigned plate and the other only gets assigned bases. The third member of the crew was having medical problems and could not umpire.

To address the situation, the UIC started to look at changes that could be made so that all games got covered. One of the two umpires would not support the changes needed to get all games covered. The reason was his agreement with SUM specified how his games were scheduled and who he had as partners.

The reassigning of games would not be aligned with the agreement he had with SUM so he left the park. He then called SUM and told them he would return if the UIC were not at the site on Sunday. The UIC was then moved from the originally assigned park to another park on Sunday.

The UAT believes the umpire who left the park and required other SUM umpires to cover more games should not have been appeased by moving the UIC. Rather, the UAT believes that the

umpire should have been suspended for a minimum of the remainder of the Spring/Summer season, if not all of 2023. The actions of the umpire put a greater burden on those umpires remaining and required a UIC to move from the assigned complex.

The UAT recognized that if SUM stopped appeasing umpires by requiring all members to work their fair share of two-break days or if they took appropriate disciplinary actions, some umpires might quit. Given the shortage of umpires already facing SUM, this could exacerbate the situation. To address this, the UAT recommends that SUM inform United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) East Coast Events that, at large tournaments, SUM can no longer provide two umpires to 14 and Under C (14UC) games and all age groups, 12U and 10U, and game levels, A, B, C, All Stars, below 14UC. All those games will now be done with a single umpire.

This will help eliminate the stress of overworking umpires because USSSA East Coast Events does not feel the impact it has from continuously expanding the number of teams at tournaments. Plus, it will send a clear message to SUM members that umpires will not be appeased when their requests and actions have a negative impact on other SUM members.

- **Complete Game Schedule to UIC**

A recommendation was given to the UAT that a complete game schedule and not just the blocks showing the level at a field be provided to the UIC at each complex. The UAT agrees with this recommendation and supports SUM asking USSSA East Coast Events to make sure all UICs have a full game schedule. This should be given on Saturday and then again on Sunday once the elimination game opponents are set.

- **Other Topics**

As a result of experiences at a few championships, the UAT discussed the situation in SUM where very few umpires know three-umpire mechanics. The discussion looked at the possibility of holding a special session on three-umpire mechanics. Plus, the UAT believes the UIC should ensure that three-umpire mechanics are discussed, and performance reviewed following all championships.

The UAT felt this was an appropriate time in the season for Rick Morris to issue some Points of Emphasis on three-umpire mechanics. Also, it was suggested that SUM develop a one-page quick review for three-umpire mechanics. Rick Morris will discuss the need for more focus on three-umpire mechanics with John Dye. This is an open action item from a previous meeting.

A second topic discussed was sportsmanship behavior on the field. Some UAT members felt that unsportsmanlike behavior was still an issue and wondered how we could change things. It was suggested that a Youtube video from the umpires to coaches could help coaches better understand our roles.

If a Youtube video was created, the UAT expected that it would go from Andy Wisk to all coaches. It was noted that USSSA East Coast Events had a digital marketing person at one time. Rick Morris said that he met that person at a meeting and the person offered to help with things. Rick took an action to contact that individual and see what could be done given the UAT thought it was a good idea.

- **Review of Action Items**

The two current Action Items were discussed and remain open. The new Action Item for Rick Morris to discuss a video with the USSSA East Coast Events digital staff was added. Action Items are contained in the attachment.

- **Next UAT Meeting**

It was agreed that the next UAT meeting would be August 14, 2023. Members can email the UAT with any topics they would like it to consider or concerns on two-break days.

Status of UAT Action Items				
Meeting	Open Item	Assignment	Status	Final Disposition
Jun 12, 2023	Contact USSSA East Coast Events digital staff to discuss umpire video	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	Obtain guidance from John Dye, working with USSSA, on how to handle loud and inappropriate music at complexes.	Ritcher	Closed	Umpires should take the initiative and stop any music that has inappropriate language in it.
Jun 6, 2022	Work with John Dye to ensure USSSA does not return protest fees.	Ritcher	Closed	John Dye has communicated this to Andy Wisk
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	Closed	USSSA East Coast Events is developing a database
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	Closed	The new database will provide an effective tool for addressing parents who are repeat problems
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
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.

Status of UAT Action Items				
Meeting	Open Item	Assignment	Status	Final Disposition
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