

The Right Call

Newsletter of the Umpires & Rules Committee Society for American Baseball Research

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From the crew chiefs. A long time ago, I learned that I was incapable of listening and taking notes at the same time. I hope this version of events at the 2000 SABR national convention in West Palm Beach, Florida bears at least a passing resemblance to what actually happened there.

In attendance at our annual meeting were Chip Atkison, Alan Davis, Reid Duffy, Bruno Egloff, Stephen Hoy, Ellen Hyman, John Lewis, Paul Matthew, Skip McAfee, Andy McCue, Barry Mednick, David Nemecek, Phyllis Otto, Doug Pappas, Tom Shieber, and Ronda Smalley. There were some (understandable) rumblings about the lack of recent newsletters. Committee members have indicated that they would like to see (1) a list of research interests, (2) an up-to-date listing of progress on the umpire roster project, (3) a newsletter, (4) and a bibliography list of umpire books. I promised to offer my resignation if the newsletter was not out by the end of July. (I do plead a missing monitor-but that was only for two days; maybe three.)

There was some discussion of what the committee has on rules and rule interpretations. Nothing formal. The Jim Evans umpiring school book has rules changes over the years for major league baseball. (Does anyone know where these can be obtained?) Bruno Egloff would like to know where to find information on what determines the minimum number of at bats/plate appearances needed to qualify for awards. (Anyone have a clue? Who decided on 3.1 PA per team game for a batting title? Why? Are the deliberations written up somewhere?) There was a consensus that the reasons for rules and rules changes is usually best found in accounts written in periodicals published at the time.

And speaking of rules-we've noticed that many of the new ballparks do NOT meet the specifications laid out in the rules. Who-we wondered-is it that has the power to grant exceptions to the rules. And, more interestingly, why bother to have ballpark specifications laid out in the rules if they won't be enforced for new parks?

Skip McAfee indicated that he would like to see umpires invited to each national convention. We'll have to check with the local and national convention committees about that.

Finally, several SABR research committees have set up electronic discussion groups. Perhaps Umpires and Rules will join them in the near future. E-mailing newsletters is another idea whose time has come around again.

Well, there's certainly a great deal of work that needs to be done. Look for future newsletters to focus more closely on committee news and research and maybe be a bit less chatty. [Note: all except this introductory portion were prepared well in advance.]

Notes. Eastern Michigan University alumni Rocky Roe and Rick Reed asked to work the final Tiger Stadium series and Marty Springstead shifted around a few assignments to grant them their wish. ... Committee member Dick Clark sent along an article, "EMU graduates call it as they see it: umpires Roe and Reed say a result of infighting in their old union was animosity and lost friendships," from the April 6, 2000 Ann Arbor Times. This also contains a box about working that final series.

Annual rosters. Ted DiTullio has sent in his 1999 umpire list. It includes the following note: *For the last several years both leagues were interchanging umpires including the same ump doing a game the same date in both leagues. The only way I see it is a day game in one league & night the other. Or a typo in umps.* Things are changing and we have Ted's optimistic view of the New [Baseball] World Order:

As I've told you, for the past few years, both leagues were crisscrossing umpires. Now that will never happen again. With this agreement we will have a renewed semblance of sanity for umpires. Therefore, my yearly ump list will be a "total" list not a league list. [...]

With time, the ump controversy will disappear, improving the game as I remember it during the 20th century. Seems funny to say that. Referring to the 20th century, that is.

Ted also has sent in two handwritten pages of ejections for last season.

Back in April 1998, Dennis Duncan, Phil Buchanan and Joe Fugere worked the first four innings of a game at St. Louis because three of the four umpires scheduled to work the game were delayed getting out of Atlanta. Eric Gregg had taken an earlier flight so as not to miss his soap operas. Well., on May 19, 2000, Lou Lowder, Keith Urich, and Rick Locaitis-Pittsburgh area college umpires-also got to work four innings. The clipping didn't state whether Dan Iassongna also is a soap opera fan.

Thanks to Steve Csik for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch articles on both of these events. Steve even got to see the latter game but failed to mention how the change was announced. ("Now umpiring at first base...")

Number that year. The committee received a list of American League umpires with notes on when they were called up but no source was listed. The umpires are Thomas H. Connolly, William A. McGowan, William Summers, Calvin Hubbard, Willaim T. Grieve, Edwin A. Rommel, George Pipgras, Joseph Rue, Ernest Stewart, Charles Berry, Harold L. Weaver, Nicholas I. Jones, James M. Boyer, and Arthur Passarella. From the notes attached to the names, it can't be any earlier than 1945.

Research requests: Excerpts from a letter written by SABR member Tim Wolter:

I have been interested in [Augie] Donatelli for some time now, as a byproduct of some research I am undertaking. Augie was a former POW. I have talked to some of his former camp mates who played ball with Augie in the Stalag, and who later looked him up as he went around the NL circuit. But I have never seen in print any comments on his POW past from the man himself.

Has anyone seen any references to this part of Donatellis past? If so, please let Tim know.
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Scoring. Louis Spry retired from the NCAA a year ago and has decided to spend at least some of his newly-found spare time advocating the "team" error concept. (Along with his other duties, Louis had been an official scorer for the CWS since 1981.) He points out that: *This*

would enable scorers to charge a team error when a fly ball drops between or among fielders. A team error could be charged when no one covers second base on a steal attempt. There probably are other situations as well." Does anyone else think the scoring rules should be amended to allow this concept? Maybe the NCAA should incorporate it and professional baseball might follow suit? if someone wanted to change the scoring rules, where would this person best direct their efforts?

Biography. Bob "Curly" Clement, who worked some major league games during the 1979 strike, was scheduled to be inducted into the Amateur Baseball Umpire Hall of Fame earlier this year. Frederick Ivor-Campbell sent along an article about Clement from the Dec. 16, 1999 (Marion, MA) *Sentinel* (2 pp.). Bob Clement began umpiring in 1947 and has been invited to work the Cape Cod league all-star game this summer. That's quite a career.

Minor leagues. Jack Carlson sent along a list of umpires in the Middle Atlantic League in the years 1933-37(1 p.). He says that the list is not complete but does include all of the umpires who worked Dayton games. The list includes four players, one amateur, and an ex-AL player (Wally Gerber). It's those one-time umpires who are the hardest to track down! In addition, he has also compiled umpires in the Central League for 1928-30 and 1932. (The Central League did not play in 1931.) I've also got his list of umpires of the 1889 Tri-State League.

Dick Clark has been extremely diligent in sending in the umpire lists he comes across. Thanks to him, we have acquired several items: 1941 directory of umpires (2 pp., includes American and National Leagues); 1949 directory of umpires (3 pp., includes ditto); PCL umpires for 1957; 1959 directory of umpires (4 pp.); International League umpires for 1967-70; 1971,74, & '87 American Association umpires; 1972-75 Carolina League umpires; 1973 Eastern League umpiring staff; South Atlantic League 1994 umpire staff as of Feb. 19 of that year; 1990 Triple A alliance umpires; 1993 Pacific Coast League umpire staff; 1997 & '98 Japanese Central & Pacific League umpire rosters-in Roman characters; American Association umpires for 1997 (2 pp., includes vitae); 1997 Southern League umpires as of Feb. 20; 1997 Midwest League umpires; 1998 Eastern League umpires (2 sets); 1998 Florida State League umpire staff; and the International League umpires for 1999.

The Texas League Newsletter of April 13, 1998 discusses Chris Guccione's odd story of being assigned to all three AA leagues in the two months prior to the season; it also lists the six new umpires to join the league staff. And the newsletter of Aug. 17, 1998, we

have notes on the umpires set to work their playoff season and some notes on major-league callups. Dick Clark also sent the 1996 National Association of Umpires.

Quotes. Skip McAfee sent in a story/quote from Alfred H. Spink's *The National Game*. According to the book, umpire Robert Ferguson once took up a baseball bat against an angry mob and shouted, "I'm only one man to your thousand, but if you don't think I can protect myself just pitch in and give it a trial." Spink then goes on to say: "Fergy" was as kind and good natured as he was brave and honest. He belonged to the game during its time of trial and tribulation and when it was often at the mercy of the black leg and crook, but when he died, there was no one who could say aught against his good name and reputation.

Optimist Mike Hargrove, before the 1999 season started, was asked his opinion on Bud Selig's memo on enforcing the strike zone. "I think umpires will still have individual strike zones but I'm sure they'll try to bring them along according to these guidelines." (from the [Cleveland] *Plain Dealer*).

Miscellaneous items. The SABR office has passed on to us a special report from the National Association of Sports Officials, "Limited Liability for Sports Officials." There's not much in it on baseball-most of the specific examples come from other sports-but if anyone needs a copy of this for research purposes, it runs 24 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 pages.

SABR member Ev Parker sent us an original poem, "Why Foulpoles Were Born." It comes with a story:

I was a kid in section 20 upstairs in the Polo Grounds with a clear view of the left field line when in 1939, Harry Craft of the Reds hit a curving line drive about 3 foot foul into the left field stands. The homeplate ump Lee Ballanfant called it a homerun, and bedlam broke loose.

This was the only time in my knowledge, when an umpiring crew of three, each threw a player out of a game, on the same play.

Harry Danning the old Giant catcher who I still correspond with, insists that ball was four to five foot foul. To me it looked like 3 foot, but it was foul Harry also said Ballanfant caught up to him one day, the following season and said, "Harry you may have been right." Then explained to Harry that Ziggy Sears and George Majerkurth signaled to him that they didn't know.

Welcome our new members:

Wayne L, McElreavy, P0 Box 1154, Claremont, NH 03743-1154 (e-mail mac@cyberportal.net); Jim Bard, 695 Cumberland Ave., Chambersburg, PA 17201-3819 (e-mail bardj@4med.usmc.mil); Tim Cashion, 1155 East 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637 (e-mail tmc@midway.uchicago.edu); Ed Lilly, 65 Tallowood Drive, Medford, NJ 08055 (e-mail emlil@aol.com); John Lewis, 6487 Carriage Dr., Reynoldsburg, OH 43068; Bruce Villagomez, 512 Addison #003, Chicago, IL 60613.

Changes for other members: John Matthew has a new e-mail address; he can now be reached at john.matthew@home.com. Phyllis Otto has as much trouble holding on to an e-mail address as she does finishing up a newsletter-her latest electronic moniker is Phyll@ottoexec.org.

Bibliography. We're always in search of items on the history of umpiring and rules. If you come across this kind of information while pursuing your research, send a copy for the URC archives. City and town newspapers usually carry more extensive stories about regional games than the national wire services. Become an umpire watcher! Items for inclusion should be sent to Phyllis Otto, 200 N. Pickett St. #415, Alexandria, VA 22304. The items below were sent in by Ted DiTullio, Harrington Crissey, Skip McAfee, Greg Crouse, Steve Csik, Dick Clark, and John Zajc.

All items are 1999 and one page unless otherwise indicated. Number of pages is my best guess once the items have been photocopied-the actual number may vary. For copies, send a SASE, 33-cent stamp per four pages, to Reid Duffy, 7242 E. 6501 Street, Indianapolis, IN 46256.

"It's *Mister* Umpire Now!" (Jim Thorpe reminisces about the good old days of umpire baiting), VCHV #17 reprint of an article originally published in *The American Legion Magazine* in April 1940, 4 pp.

"The Profession of Umpiring" by Dick Butler, AL supervisor of umpires, Detroit Tiger souvenir magazine (?), 1974 (?), 2 pp.

"Calling it his way: As the major leagues' first black umpire, Emmett Ashford used charisma, strong will to create a lasting impression," *Plain Dealer*, May 12, 1997, 2 pp.

"Dawn of a new E.R.A." by Matthew Ernst (1996 ERA. by home plate umpire), *Village Voice*, July 22, 1997, 3 pp.

"Manager Hargrove believes Greg Kosc missed a hit-by-pitch call on Manny Ramirez," *Akron Beacon Journal*, Sept. 14, 1997.

"Umpires throw out timer plan: officials say no to TV's demand for stopwatches," *Akron Beacon Journal*, Sept. 18, 1997.

"Seattle beats Tribe after tempers flare, ejections fly" (Hickox ejects Johnson, Lofton, and Alomar), *Plain Dealer*, April 16, 1998, 2 pp.

"Wanted: competent umpiring" (commentary on events described above), by Terry Pluto, *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 17, 1998, 2 pp.

"Brosius overcomes umpire's call in 9th" (Tschida calls foul ball), *Plain Dealer*, June 19, 1998.

"Piniella tantrum amuses crowd" (and gets him ejected by Barnett) *Plain Dealer*, Aug. 27, 1998, 2 pp.

"Piniella kicks up memories of Weaver in 1979," *Plain Dealer*, Aug. 28, 1998.

"Rediscovered punch" and "Prague says Indians were pitching dirty" (Young ejects Visquel and Hargrove), *Plain Dealer*, Sept. 14, 1998, 2 pp.

"Man in blue shows true colors" (Bud Shaw commentary), "Short fuses ignite Tribe's 9-5 victory" (2 pp. Game story), "Top of the First" (full newspaper page -4 pp-with history of Joe Brinkman incidents, pitch-by-pitch description of one inning, quotes from players, Hargrove, and Brinkman, and a very short Brinkman bio), and more game stories on the back of that page (Brinkman ejects Gooden and Hargrove), *Plain Dealer*, Oct. 1, 1998.

"Yanks charge ump with error", "Yankees of short memory cry foul", "Yankees show very human side" and rule 6.05 (k) and 7.09 (k)-the *Plain Dealer* does another full page on an umpire's [Schulock] call, Oct. 8, 1998.

"Once more, singing blues over umps," by Ken Rosenthal (Pat Gillick is "sick" of dealing with umpires-thinks the problem needs to be addressed), *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 9, 1998.

"Let's let the umpire assignment secret out," Paul White commentary from *Baseball Weekly*, Oct. 14-20, 1998.

"Moody Blues: as umpires blunder and bluster their way through the postseason, players are peeved, fans are howling, and baseball is searching for a way to put the best umps on the field" and "A few words from God" (interview with Doug Harvey), *Sports Illustrated*, Oct. 19, 1998, 4 pp.

"In going to bat for Alomar, Davis makes call on umps," by Ken Rosenthal (Eric Davis says umpires were out to get even with Roberto Alomar for spitting on John Hirschbeck), *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 25, 2 pp.

"Push on to centralize umps," *USA Today*, March 19

"Players: Umps' strike perspective is the same" by Chuck Johnson, *USA Today*, April 16, 2 pp.

"Orioles run out of leads" (contains complaints about Brian Onora's wide strike zone), *Washington Post*, May 11.

"Pitcher has hitters bobbing, Weaving" (Manny Ramirez and C.J. Nitkowski ejected), *Plain Dealer*, May 23. Also "Ump knows shove wasn't personal" (but Jim Evans will mention Ramirez bump in his report). Plus "Tribe drops two straight to Detroit" (the game story), 2 pp.

"Plate umpire nearly called Ramirez out" (but Cederstrom says catcher Santiago dropped the ball), *Plain Dealer*, June 6.

"Hargrove disdains baseball's mind games" (but asks Jim Evans crew to check baseballs thrown by Gil Heredia), *Plain Dealer*, June 18.

"Baseball's umpires plan to quit on Sept. 2," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 15.

"Umpires say quitting is worth the risk," *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 16.

"Umpires aren't booed at Busch, but Cards fans aren't on their side," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 16.

"Umpires' aim: Stop baseball-Action threatens postseason; Cone: 'Games should go on'" (includes box "College replacements would bring slightly inflated strike zone" and a chronology of umpires' grievances with MLB beginning with 1979 strike), "Umps say they quit rather than be fired," and "Umpires' call strikes out with fans, broadcasters," *USA Today* July 16, 5 pp.

"Umpires say they're overlooked, unappreciated," *USA Today*, July 19

"Some ump's rethink resignation," *USA Today*, July 20

"Are some ump's just balking? Reports say several want to rescind their resignations," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 20

"Umps given Friday deadline [to rescind resignations]." *USA Today*, July 21

"Phillips: 'We're trying to force the issue' - MLB umpires are gambling that the sport needs them more than they need baseball," *Baseball Weekly*, July 21-27, 2 pp.

"Some umpires want new leader-Phillips too confrontational, Hirschbeck, supporters say," *USA Today*, July 22

"More ump's waffle on resigning: minor-leaguers ready to step up," *Plain Dealer*, July 22

"Selig hires minor ump's as replacements: move puts pressure on splintering union," *Baltimore Sun*, July 23

"MLB takes hard line on ump's: won't accept withdrawals," *USA Today*, July 23

"Baseball: umpires on deck-leagues promote 10 to step in on Sept. 1," *Washington Post*, July 23

"Subs already being hired," *USA Today*, July 23.

"Tribe loss is wrong from start: Incorrect lineup card means Indians must play without DH," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 23. 2 pp.

"Tribe loses DH, ballgame to Toronto" and "Lineup card mix up embarrasses Indians" (2 pp.), *Plain Dealer*, July 23.

"Umps unite as baseball hires backups," *Plain Dealer*, July 23.

"Hargrove's lineup mix-up fails to make history" (emanations other faulty lineup cards: Ralph Houk in 1976 and Tom Trebeihorn in 1988), *Plain Dealer*, July 25.

"Umpires: baseball plan hurts game's integrity" (also includes rankings from MLBPA 1998 umpire survey). *USA Today*, July 28

"[Richie] Phillips says umps forced to fight" (interview with umpires' general counsel), *Baseball Weekly*, July 28-Aug. 3, 4pp,

"In career call, ump plays it safe" (Rocky Roes explains why he rescinded his resignation), *Detroit Free Press*, undated, 2 pp.

"Is small 'fracture' MLBs big break?: As Richie Phillips' umpires union weakens the owners are gaining confidence for showdowns on the horizon," , *Baseball Weekly*, July 28-Aug. 2 pp.

"Minor league umps foil strategy Saying no to Phillips ends gamble of mass resignations" (also includes statement from major league dissenting umpires) *USA Today*, July 29, 2 pp.

"NL umps vow to tight after 13 lose jobs" *USA Today* July 30

"Umpire split grows uglier; leagues blast harassment," wire reports from *The Plain Dealer*, Aug. 1, 2 pp.

"Tough call for Phillips / Umpires union leader battles to restore 22 jobs" and box "Phillips, Coleman exchange volleys in umpires dispute," *USA Today*, Aug. 13, 3 pp.

"Union busy in court trying to save umps" and "Baseball has umps waiting in wings" *USA Today*, Aug. 31, 2 pp.

"Umps seek help from court 22 about to lose their jobs," *USA Today*, Aug. 31

"Facing the old heave-ho: 22 umpires on verge of losing jobs," *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 1, 2 pp. Includes box from *Phila. Inquirer*, "Umpires paying for one bad call."

"It's last of the 9th for 22 major-league umps," *Chicago Sun-Times*, Sept. 1

"The umps are in the dumps," *Sun-Times* Mike Riley column, not dated.

"Judge to 22 umps: You're out! Court OKs settlement; Phillips likely to lose job," *Sun-Times*, Sept. 2

"22 umpires lost call they wanted the most," *Chicago Tribune*, undated

"Klem the Old Arbitrator, was father of umpiring," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 2, 2 pp.

"22 umps officially out of jobs: League to pay full benefits," *USA Today*, Sept. 2

"Ump dispute brings back bad memories: Lanny Harris' widow relives events through today's news," *USA Today*, Sept. 3

"Umpires' saga not over; could end on more positive note" (also contains list of retained and new umpires). *Baseball Weekly*, Sept. 8-14, 2 pp.

"[Ed] Hickox out of a job after only 10 months," *Baseball Weekly*, Sept. 8-14, 2 pp.

"Overly aggressive ump disciplined" (John Shulock) and "Arbitrator picked", *Baseball Weekly*, Sept. 29-Oct. 5

"[Rich] Garcia a casualty of umps' civil war," *Baseball Weekly*, Sept. 29-Oct. 5, 2 pp.

"Umpires get results Tuesday / Each side expects vote to decide union leadership will be close," *USA Today*, Nov. 30.

"Umps' call: Phillips out, new union in," *USA Today*, Dec. 1.

"Minor league umps unionize for first time," *Baseball Weekly*, Jan. 12-18, 2000.

"MLB striving for ump' uniformity," *USA Today*, Feb. 7, 2000.

"Hirschbeck wants 'new start' as union head," *USA Today*, Feb. 28, 2000.

"Umps pact a small, but crucial, step," *Baseball Weekly*, March 29-April 4, 2000, 2 pp.

"Balk! Orioles win in the 9th(called by Lamplugh and Iassonga, also mention of Surhoff ejection by Lamplugh), *Washington Post*, April 29, 2000, 2 pp.

"Umps await arbitrator's call: 22 who lost jobs labor to handle emotional swings," *USA Today*, May 11, 2000, 3 pp.

"Mr. Blue" [Feature story about Steve Traina, an amateur umpire for 14 years), *Plain Dealer Sunday Magazine*, June 4, 2000, 9 pp.

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