



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Officiating AUSTRALIA

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Australian Sports Commission Board member Margot Foster (second from left) with the three Officials Development Award finalists, Allan Wishewan, Kim Lees and Gordon McNaughton.

Ausport Officials Development Award

On 4 March 2005, the Australian sports industry lauded its unsung heroes at the 2005 Ausport Awards. Held in conjunction with the Australian Sports Commission's Our Sporting Future forum, the Ausport Awards were presented in front of over 450 attendees, ranging from grassroots volunteers through to national sporting organisation executives and board members.

Across ten categories, 30 finalists were recognised for their contribution to the industry. Kim Lees from Australian Rugby Union was awarded the 2005 Ausport Award in the Officials Development category. Lees, and his fellow finalists

Gordon McNaughton from Surf Life Saving Australia and Allan Wishewan from Ice Hockey Australia, were all recognised for their long-term commitment to improving officiating in their sports, from grassroots to elite. Among the three finalists, there was more than 120 years of experience in developing and supporting officials.

Lees began his contribution to rugby union as an active official in 1971 and went on to referee more than 600 games at the junior and senior levels before retiring in 1996 to devote his time to developing officials.

He began his formal officials coaching and development role with Rugby WA, before moving to ACT Rugby Union in 1999. In 2002, Lees commenced work as the Australian Rugby Union's Referee Education Manager, a position he still holds.

Lees has worked in volunteer administrative and development roles for more than 20 years and has made a significant contribution to the development and delivery of education programs and materials for officials.

He has held and contributed to a considerable number of roles relating to officials development, including as a mentor, referee manager, referee coach and development officer, as well as grading, organising and presenting education seminars, and developing and refining numerous accreditation courses. He has assisted in developing and delivering many courses, publications and coaching programs over the years.

The Australian Sports Commission congratulates all the finalists for having their achievements recognised through the Ausport Awards. For more information on the Ausport Awards, visit www.ausport.gov.au/events/ausportawards2005/index.asp.



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For more information on enrolling in an officiating course, checking your National Officiating Accreditation Scheme status, updating your contact details, or general information on officiating in Australia, visit www.ausport.gov.au/official/index.asp.

The Australian Sports Commission is the Australian Government body responsible for the delivery of funding and development of Australian sport through the implementation of the Government's sport policy, Building Australian Communities through Sport. It was established by, and operates under, the *Australian Sports Commission Act 1989*. Its national leadership role is achieved through three operational areas: Australian Institute of Sport, Sport Performance and Development, and Business Operations. The Australian Sports Commission forms part of the Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio.

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No such thing as retirement

While working as an official two weeks ago, I had a chance to listen to several senior officials discussing the topic of retiring from officiating in sport. They suggested that most officials have no desire to leave the sport they embrace even though they have many reasons for departing. Some of the reasons they identified for officials leaving sport were medical conditions or prevailing injuries that would prevent them from fulfilling their duties at a national or international level. Others have increased time commitments from work and/or family, or changed financial situations. Finally, many officials have age restrictions placed on them by either national or international bodies and therefore feel they would be forced into retirement.

For the next few hours I pondered the future of these hardworking officials and wondered what provisions sport offers as an alternative to retiring completely. Surely with the skills and knowledge that each individual possesses, there should be several areas for an official to transfer their wealth of experience. Several options came to mind, including mentoring another official, coaching or training a group of officials, presenting educational courses, officiating at a lower level (for example, state or club level), becoming part of a technical commission at state or national level, or even becoming involved in talent identification of younger officials.

The mentoring process could involve working alongside a less-experienced official and passing on skills and knowledge using a one-to-one format.

Alternatively, working with a group rather than individuals would provide the experienced official with the opportunity to sow a seed with many officials and watch them grow. Presenting educational courses to upcoming officials is a great opportunity for those that are time-poor and can only contribute perhaps one or two hours on a quarterly basis. Officials could return to where it all began by supporting their local club and passing on valuable knowledge to less experienced officials.

Becoming part of a technical commission would allow input into policy and procedures and so prevent many of the problems that may have arisen during the official's career.

Finally, the 'retiring' official may not be time-poor and so can visit the local sportsgrounds looking for those rare individuals that possess the special qualities that would allow them to become a national or even international official.

I am sure you could add to this list through your own officiating experiences and provide even greater opportunities for those officials who will always remain part of sport. So when you feel 'forced into retirement', make the transition to the next level of officiating and remain part of a sport that you love and enjoy.

Glenn Doney

State-level Cycling Commissaire
Sports Consultant
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Australian Sports Commission



Neville Lawrance, softball

*'Bloody mongrel' ...
but a bloody good one*

by **Cathy Reid**

Being referred to in a strangely affectionate way as that 'bloody mongrel' is something Neville Lawrance has come to accept after 23 years as a softball umpire.

Umpiring has been an all-consuming passion that began one quiet, sunny Saturday afternoon when Lawrance went to watch his wife, Rosie, play softball. Two decades later he has the unwavering reputation as one of Australia's best and fairest softball umpires, with an Olympic Games under his belt.

'I was initially roped in as assistant coach, but then my work conditions changed and I wasn't able to get to training any more. By that time I was hooked so I turned to umpiring,' Lawrance said.

The 52-year-old, from Modbury Heights in Adelaide, had always had an interest in umpiring and had been a basketball official for ten years.

At the root of his dedication was a desire to see fair play.

At first he had no burning ambition to rise up the ranks of officialdom, but rather took it 'one step at a time'.

However, he was driven to be better and took every opportunity to improve his style. This meant moving to stronger competitions and always taking on new challenges.



His first foray into umpiring at the national level came in 1991 at the under-16 nationals in Hobart.

'In a word, that was scary,' Lawrance recalls. 'It was a whole new ball game. Six examination games over four days, umpiring with other officials I'd never met before and controlling games with players I didn't know.'

But one of the biggest differences was encountering coaches who had a good knowledge of the rules of the game, or who at least thought they did, and were not afraid to let the umpires know about it.

'They were a lot more forthright in questioning calls and that was quite intimidating at first.'

The scrutiny of his umpiring did not faze Lawrance for long and he quickly discovered the upside of being at a major event.

'The camaraderie among the officials is absolutely fantastic and I look forward every year to meeting up with these guys. Some of them you don't see for three or four years and you just pick up with them straight away.'

Lawrance gained his International Softball Federation accreditation in 1997 after attending an umpire development clinic over three days.

'It was a camp environment and I found out how much I didn't know. I learnt about things I'd never even thought of, like how you can control your adrenaline levels so you can perform at your optimum level. A whole new world opened up.'

His first overseas trip was to New Zealand on tour with the Australian under-19 team.

'All of a sudden I was out of my comfort zone in a different environment and for the first time I found myself attached to a team, whereas before I'd never had that affinity.'

'Of course, when you get out on the diamond you still have to be very impartial.'

It was in New Zealand where Lawrance was first introduced to a different style of umpiring, which was a four-man rotation



system. It was a system he recommended be introduced back in Australia at some major events.

Lawrance quickly made a mark on the international scene, which led to the highlight of his career so far — being appointed to umpire at the Athens Olympics in 2004.

'I found out when I was at work and I was walking on air, floating around the office. It was just fabulous.'

While he was a little disappointed with Athens itself and the lack of crowds at the games, as far as officiating goes, he says it does not get any better.

'It's the biggest stage any team or player can strive for and as an umpire the pressure is like nothing I'd ever experienced before.'

'It's not something you can prepare for or practise. You just have to have it in you to step up a notch.'

'That said, you still have to try and treat it like an ordinary game and stay relaxed. That's really the key. All the experience you've gathered over the years is going to kick in and help you make the right decisions.'

Not everyone is always going to be satisfied with those decisions, and over the years Lawrance has learned to roll with the criticism and take it in his stride.

'A lot of it is gamesmanship. A coach may make a big scene by challenging a decision, but we know, and they know, it's not going to change anything.'

'A lot of times it's all about the coach being seen to be standing up for their girls. Even though it's not going to make a difference, they can go back to the dugout and mutter "bloody mongrel" and their team feels like they're doing something.'

Because he approaches every game the same way, Lawrance knows there can never be any question marks over his integrity.

'It gives me the utmost satisfaction going out and knowing I've done the best job I can. It's a great feeling to know that you've provided a service that has allowed a game to happen.'

It is something he is keen to pass on to others.

'There's so much you can do and achieve as an official. There are so many steps up the ladder and the world really is the limit.'

And if anyone is proof of that it is Neville Lawrance ... and he is happy to concede that a thick hide and a bit of an ego can only help.

Strategies to deal with abuse of officials

The following best-practice examples were presented at the Our Sporting Future forum held in Sydney in March 2005, organised by the Australian Sports Commission.

Basketball Australia

Michael Haynes, General Manager — Community Basketball

Retaining officials is as much, if not more, of a challenge for sporting associations as attracting them in the first place. With the support of the Australian Sports Commission, Basketball Australia undertook a number of initiatives during the Year of the Official aimed at the retention of officials.

The introduction of fair play awards at our national championships was very successful and has been adopted by a number of state and local associations. During the championships each team was assessed for its fair play — this included the coaches, players and spectators. The team rated as 'fairest' was presented with the award at the closing ceremony. These awards focus on rewarding the 'good' rather than penalising the 'bad' and make a clear statement that officials (referees, score table and statisticians) are valued in our sport.



Even though some officials get paid, that is not a retention strategy. Tangibly valuing them and acknowledging their important role is a much more potent retention strategy. Some elements of this strategy were:

- making announcements during national championships (hourly) of the importance of officials and that abuse of them would not be tolerated
- preparing guidelines on how to approach spectators whose behaviour towards officials was inappropriate
- ensuring a safe place in the association for officials to change, relax, leave their gear and so on
- identifying learning referees (some associations put 'L' plates on their uniform). The theory behind this is that we are generally conditioned to be more tolerant of people we know are still learning
- introducing the 'sit-down' rule, prohibiting coaches from speaking to officials during the game
- presenting referees of finals with a medal.

The most important message is that it does not end now that the Year of the Official is over. Officials are as necessary to our game as the ball and the hoop, and demonstrating that they are valued goes a long way towards attracting and keeping them.

Australian Football League

Adrian Panazzo, National Umpiring Development Manager

From the Australian Football League's perspective we are supporting the development of the game and umpiring on a number of fronts. The two programs look at both the environment in which umpires officiate and the quality of instruction they get access to during the critical stages of their early development.

Development staff and umpires who present coach education courses have historically focused on the laws and interpretations of the game. Now, in a deliberate move, the central theme in coach education courses is, 'coaches make better umpires'. We discuss the role of the coach in setting the right environment and establishing the proper values that support the umpire and their development. We say that the coach is the most influential person in the sporting club, and that they have a



broader responsibility to the game than simply winning.

We also canvass the coaches for strategies and ideas that we can use to improve umpire development. Ultimately we ask them to reflect on their role as coach and how they can support the umpires that officiate matches. No umpire has actually ever improved their performance as a result of abuse or poor treatment by coaches and clubs. Like any athlete, they rely on confidence and quality feedback to properly develop.

The Umpire Mentoring Program is an umpire education and development program that aims to use experienced umpires to mentor new and inexperienced umpires.

The program connects these new and inexperienced umpires with an umpiring mentor to assist them with their early development. New and inexperienced umpires wear a coloured shirt as a signal to coaches, players and supporters that they are learning their craft and are being supported by a mentor, and should be supported and encouraged.

With its origins in Barossa (South Australia), Bendigo (Victoria) and Northside Juniors (New South Wales) this program was launched nationally in 2004. Over 300 trained mentors and 1000 young and inexperienced umpires are involved in the program in 2005.

MENTORING

Mentoring is nothing new, particularly in sport. Most sportspeople and many coaches and officials would freely admit that they have sought the advice of an experienced player, coach or official at some point in their career.

Mentoring is a highly effective way for new coaches and officials to learn the 'art' of their role, and apply theory that they may have learnt in a classroom or through independent study. Mentoring relationships can be formally structured, with mentors assigned to officials, or they can grow out of a chance encounter with a like-minded official and remain very informal.

Mentoring for officials' development can serve a variety of purposes. It can be used as a:

- key learning experience for officials to gain their accreditation
- means of supervising officiating practice associated with accreditation
- means of professional development for officials at any level of accreditation
- means to 'fast track' officials with potential through their accreditation.

The benefits to the organisation of establishing a mentoring program include:

- easing the difficulty and costs involved in conducting lengthy residential training courses
- tapping into the expertise of experienced officials in the organisation
- re-energising experienced officials who take on mentoring roles
- developing officials so they become future mentors and better people managers
- encouraging officials to progress to the next level of accreditation through the motivation and assistance they receive from a mentor
- being a particularly useful tool to recruit, educate and retain female officials.

The benefits to the mentor include:

- renewed enthusiasm and commitment to their own work
- opportunities to share their knowledge and skills
- recognition of personal expertise
- new learning for themselves
- promotion of lifelong learning through relationships.

The benefits to the official include:

- increased confidence and motivation
- constructive feedback on performance
- help to translate theory into practice
- networking opportunities and enhanced career prospects
- promotion of lifelong learning through relationships
- minimising the difficulties of attending training courses.

Some do's and do not's for officials being mentored:

- Be clear about your goals and desires and be able to express your needs and accept responsibility for your decisions and choices.
- Take responsibility for 'driving' the relationship — do not wait for your mentor to initiate action.
- Have reasonable expectations of your mentor — respect your mentor's time and needs.
- Look for a mentor with similar values and with the skills that you wish to gain.
- Acknowledge your mentor's role in your achievements.

When can mentoring occur?

Some opportunities for mentoring include:

- **At training** — a mentor can be invited to observe some of the official's training sessions, or they may even take a part of a session to give the official an opportunity to see them in action.
- **At competitions** — you need to consider, however, the effect that any mentoring will have on the performance of the athletes. Perhaps scheduling some time with a mentor after competition to review the official's performance is the best compromise.
- **Video analysis** — it may be difficult to have a mentor attend a practice session or competition, particularly for officials in rural areas. A good alternative is to video tape the official in action and send the footage to the mentor for comment. It is also important to provide the mentor with some background, as they will not be aware of the context in which the footage is taken. The video process should ideally be a catalyst for discussion of the official's performance, not become the focus of the exercise in itself.

Characteristics of successful mentoring relationships

- Good rapport between the mentor and the official
- Trust and confidentiality
- Demonstrated interest and enthusiasm
- Clear objectives and goals
- Mutual respect
- Clear communication and feedback — the mentor becomes a 'critical friend'
- Physical environment for meetings is comfortable
- A shared experience
- Fun and enjoyment
- Acknowledgment and celebration of achievements
- Others are aware and supportive of the mentoring relationship

Adapted from *Making Mentors: a guide to establishing a successful mentoring program for coaches and officials*, Australian Sports Commission, Canberra 2002

Video analysis for self-assessment by officials

Video analysis is used for a variety of purposes in sport. Some of the more common uses include coaches using video analysis to review athletes' performance and to analyse opposition play as part of match preparation. Sporting organisations use video analysis in coach and official accreditation programs for assessment of coaches or officials in remote locations. Some sporting teams are even using video analysis to analyse the referees or umpires who control their games in an effort to adjust their play to anticipate decisions that the referee might make in the game. It is also not unusual for coaches to use video analysis for self-reflection.

The use of video analysis for ongoing performance review and assessment is not as widely used by officials as it might be. There are many aspects of officiating performance that can reap significant benefits from post-event review by video analysis.

Officials may receive valuable feedback from their umpire or referee coordinator or a mentor, but this can be supplemented by reviewing the previous match or event on video.

Part of the umpire performance analysis system used by the International Cricket Council at the conclusion of every Test match and One Day International Series is the provision to umpires of DVDs containing video footage and replays of each decision made, which can be viewed frame-by-frame for in-depth analysis.

This system provides an effective means of identifying both strengths and weaknesses in an umpire's performance and enables the International Cricket Council to work with the umpire to provide feedback on their performance and identify ways of addressing any areas of concern, as well as monitoring improvements or changes in performance.

Not all officials will have access to this level of professional support, however the principles can be applied at any level. If an official can find someone to video them in action, they can then use the video footage to assess their performance in a range of areas such as:



- **Positioning** — was the official in the best position to make the call on each play and were they in the appropriate position in relation to other officials?
- **Missed calls** — how many infringements did the official miss during the event?
- **Accuracy of calls** — were all of the calls that the official made the correct ones for the circumstances?
- **Timeliness of calls** — did the official take too long to make the call after the incident occurred?
- **Non-verbal communication** — did the official display appropriate body language when delivering rulings; did the official use hand signals and body placement consistent with the requirements of their sport?
- **Verbal communication** — were rulings delivered in a clear and concise manner?
- **Interaction with players/coaches/managers/spectators** — was the official's interaction with all participants appropriate in terms of language, timing, duration of interaction and information imparted?
- **Impact on flow of the game** — did the official have appropriate control of the event in terms of allowing the game to flow or calling too many stops to play?
- **Concentration** — was the official focused on the event at all times or were they distracted by other people or activities occurring around them?
- **Teamwork with other officials** — how did the official interact with other officials involved in the event, for example, linespeople or judges?

Once an official has video footage of their performance, they should attempt to analyse it in an impersonal manner to identify learning opportunities and potential areas for improvement. They can then be aware of their areas of strength and weakness, and how particular aspects of their performance have developed over time. They will be in a position to try to improve on any areas of weakness in future outings, or to seek assistance from someone with appropriate expertise in a particular area.

With regular use, video analysis can provide significant assistance in improving performance.

Play by the Rules www.playbytherules.net.au/

Play by the Rules is an online training and information resource for sport and recreation clubs and associations. Play by the Rules provides information on how to prevent and deal with inappropriate behaviour, including discrimination, harassment, favouritism, bias and various forms of abuse.

Play by the Rules has three main aims:

- **Information** — to give you information regarding discrimination, harassment and child protection.
- **Rights** — to explore what your rights are, and how the law protects your right to participate in sport and recreation activities and not be unfairly discriminated against.
- **Responsibilities** — to ensure that you know about your responsibilities under the law.

Play by the Rules contains several sections including:

- online training programs
 - Play by the Rules offers four free, tailored online training courses for:
 - coaches
 - administrators
 - umpires
 - players, participants and volunteers
 - the courses are short, taking no more than two hours, and may be done in part or all at once
 - the courses make extensive use of case studies
 - an official certificate is issued on successful completion of a course
- frequently asked questions
- legislation
- court decisions
- what's new?
- resources to download and use
 - model policies
 - model codes of practice



- publications
- surveys
- forum.

You can also email a query to the site for a prompt, confidential response.

The Play by the Rules web site is currently being redesigned and restructured so that initial access and information will be organised into user roles, and information is tailored to different levels of the sport and recreation industry. Some of the new features that will be available on the Play by the Rules web site include:

- generic child-protection content
- several new features, including sport surveys

- brochures, flyers and posters that can be downloaded from the site.

The new-look web site is currently being 'road tested' and is expected to be available online in July 2005, with an official launch scheduled for October 2005.

For further information, contact Paul Donohue on (02) 6214 1994 (paul.donohue@ausport.gov.au) or Mary Duncan on (08) 8204 1725 (duncan.mary@agd.sa.gov.au).

Play by the Rules is a joint initiative of the Australian Sports Commission, state and territory departments of sport and recreation, and state and territory equal opportunity commissions.



Visit the Australian Sports Commission officiating web site
www.ausport.gov.au/officials.asp

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NEW! Current Concepts in Sports Nutrition



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