

NCAA Baseball Central Hub

About the Umpire Improvement Program

Friday, October 23, 2009

NCAA UMPIRE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

MISSION STATEMENT

To identify, train, and evaluate umpires for assignment to NCAA Division I regional and super regional tournaments and the College World Series; to improve the overall quality and consistency of officiating throughout college baseball; to promote better communication between umpires, coaches, conferences and the NCAA; and to provide consistency in the interpretation of NCAA Baseball Rules and umpiring mechanics.

PROGRAM HISTORY

In 1990 the NCAA Division I baseball committee created an Umpire Improvement Program (UIP) for baseball. Jon Bible was selected as the first national coordinator of umpires and held the position until August of 1996. The structure of the initial program was a national coordinator and eight regional evaluators that assisted in the evaluation and assignment process. The program goals were to improve the level of officiating during the championship, standardize rule interpretations and umpire mechanics across the country and assist in identifying and selecting umpires for the Division I championship. Jon and Bill Thurston, NCAA Secretary-Rules Editor, began the one day umpire clinics across the country, not only explaining the UIP program, but rule changes, points of emphasis, and troublesome rules. Prior to the establishment of the UIP program, championship umpires were selected and assigned by the Division I baseball committee made up primarily of coaches. This procedure was not the most effective method to select officials for the national championship. After implementation of the UIP program, the assignments were initially made by the national coordinator and his evaluators and approved by the baseball committee. During this time and through 1999, umpire assignments for the championship were made during the annual fall meeting of the baseball committee. This timing was due to 1) very few, if any, conferences maintained a staff of umpires, had a coordinator of umpires, or had a process in which in-season evaluations could be conducted and 2) due to the time requirements of the championship, it was felt that umpires needed to know their assignments in advance in order to schedule the time. Since 1997 the assignments made were tentative and not confirmed until April.

In the fall of 1996, Jon Bible resigned as the national coordinator and a significant restructuring of the UIP took place. Dave Yeast became the national coordinator and a group of four regional evaluators was put in place. Since more conferences were organizing staffs of baseball officials, a line of communication was needed between the NCAA and the conferences. A liaison was appointed for each of the 29 Division I conferences, thus expanding the number of persons evaluating and recommending umpires from 9 to 34. An in-season evaluation process was developed to increase the

documented assessment of umpires.

In 1998, the NCAA guidebook was created that outlines the program policies and procedures and is distributed to every umpire in the program and all conferences. In 2000, the NCAA championships cabinet adopted a policy prohibiting the redlining of umpires. In 2000, the NCAA made significant changes to the assigning process. These included 1) each Division I conference selected their own liaison to the NCAA and 2) each conference was asked to submit a list of umpires to be considered for assignment based on in-season evaluations. The national coordinator and regional advisors reviewed these recommendations and made selections in early May. In 2001, the championships cabinet clarified the red lining policy by indicating that the prohibition applied to conference and non conference games. In addition, in 2001, the regional evaluator positions were eliminated.

In 2003, the baseball committee voted not to assign any umpire conference coordinator to any round of the Division I championship to begin in 2006. In 2004, the UIP initiated the first NCAA development camps. Each Division I conference was provided the opportunity to invite umpires to participate.

These camps were eliminated in 2007 due to budgetary restraints. In 2005, the championships cabinet mandated that conferences oversee the assigning of non-conference umpires. Also, in 2005 the NCAA Division II and Division III baseball committees selected their first coordinators of umpires, Asa Howard for DII and George Drouches for DIII. The UIP initiated the on-line rules test in 2005 and in 2006, the successful completion of the test was added as a requirement to umpire in the baseball championships. For the 2006 season, the NCAA added baseball umpires to the sports requiring registration for a background check and successful passing if selected as a requirement for championship assignment. In the fall of 2006, three regional advisors were hired to assist with in-season evaluation and post season selection and assignment to the baseball championships.

In the summer of 2008, following the resignation of Dave Yeast, a new national coordinator, Gene McArtor, was hired. In the fall of 2008, the number of regional advisors was increased to four. In addition a new position, director of umpires, was hired to assist in the mechanics and overall educational process for umpires. In 2009 the NCAA began the two year cycle for rules.

In the 2010 season, background check processes were expanded and enhanced. In addition, NCAABaseball.Arbitersports.com was designated by the NCAA as the official website manager for NCAA baseball. This website requires a registration fee for Division I umpires to be eligible to work the championship and includes the testing and background check information for selection eligibility. In 2010, for the first time college world series umpires were not selected to work a super regional. In the fall of 2010 a new DII national Coordinator was selected, Dan Weikle.

In the 2011 season K-Zone was used for the first time at the CWS and limited use of instant replay was approved for the CWS in 2012.

November, 2011