



December Plays and Clarifications

Comments from the Director of Umpires:

Now that the 2016 Council Meeting has concluded we are officially USA Softball. A lot went on and many items were covered at this year's Council Meeting to get everything ready to hit the ground running in 2017. We passed new Code and Procedural Manual items, a few new rules for our game and everyone left Shreveport united as USA Softball. We now move forward to this exciting time for our organization.

This also means we as umpires have a new and stronger brand to build on, to expand on and to work together to make our umpires even better than they have ever been. We have a lot on our plate in 2017 from exciting new tournaments and Championships for our umpires to work. We also have a new National Invitational Tournament (NIT) to help our Slow Pitch program. If we embrace these changes we cannot help but become a better umpire program going forward.

We actually start the New Year in December of 2016 with our first USA Softball National Umpire School under the new format. It will be held in Texas under the umbrella of USA Softball of DFW. We will roll out a new agenda that includes new lectures, new drills and a school that focuses on attendee participation and interaction. We foresee this as the school of the future for USA Softball.

We move from there right into our Biennial Umpire in Chief (UIC) Clinic being held February 2-5 with February 5 being a travel day. The clinic starts early evening on Thursday, February 2 and continues through our banquet Saturday night with travel home on Sunday. If you have not registered, go online now as the clinic is filling fast. The same holds true for the rooms, as the hotels have been booking up since October. We still have some great hotels along with the host hotel that have offered us some great rates. Don't wait, make your reservations now.

Umpire Manual

Once you receive your Umpire Manual you will notice a lot of gray shaded areas. Our Umpire Manual Committee has spent a tremendous amount of time adding and enhancing words and improving statements to try and make our manual a more user friendly document. They have tried to combine words and phrases we commonly use when discussing mechanics and put them in the manual where we felt it would help our umpires better understand our mechanics.

You will also see a new page titled Point of Emphasis. These pages cover questions about mechanics, frequently missed mechanics at National Championships and the why's of our

mechanics. Our goal is to do a better job of explaining specific mechanics and how they fit into our umpire systems. We will update this page yearly and hopefully it proves to be a useful tool to communicate with our umpires. For those who have questions get them to your UIC, Regional UIC, or one of the Deputy Directors so they can be addressed in the monthly postings.

Training Tools

USA Softball has been working diligently in partnership with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) team to produce some videos to help train both NFHS and USA Softball umpires. Those videos are set to be produced and available in the February 2017 time frame. There will be three videos in one production and they will cover the subjects of Game Management, Interference and Obstruction. We feel these videos will be an invaluable tool in helping umpires better understand obstruction and interference and the importance of Game Management.

Registration and Background Checks

It is time to remind everyone that all umpires working Junior Olympic (JO) Championship Play must pass a USA Softball background check annually. We had a few instances last year when this did not happen. We tried and felt we had a good process in place to ensure all of our JO National Championship umpires were background checked. Going forward in 2017 we will need to establish a time frame for umpires to be USA Softball registered and background checked before they can be assigned to a JO National Championship. You will be advised of the new procedure once it is complete.

Thank You

We wanted to say thank you to all of you that are USA Softball umpires. Your dedication to our program is beyond reproach. Whether you go out every week and umpire league play, or umpire National Championships or participate in your umpire program by helping in any way you deserve our gratitude. Thank you for being a USA Softball umpire.

To end everything for 2016 we want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas, a Happy Holiday Season and an exciting New Year in 2017.