



## Umpire harassment, attrition, and retention in Ridge Meadows Minor Softball Association

### Abstract

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Ridge Meadows Minor Softball Association is a leader among the softball associations in the Lower Mainland. As one executive put it, “We do everything a little bit better.” Nevertheless, one of the problems it shares with other associations is the ongoing harassment its umpires endure from ambitious coaches and parents. This study examines the experiences of umpires in Ridge Meadows so that the executive might better understand how to curb harassment and prevent more entry-level umpires from quitting.

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*"Playing the game one pitch at a time"*

**Ridge Meadows Minor Softball Association**





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## Executive Summary

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Director of Association Operations Sally Clayton and Umpire-in-chief Bill Kazulin have invested hundreds of volunteer hours every year for the last three decades to ensure Ridge Meadows Minor Softball Association (RMMSA) runs as smoothly as possible. They, along with dozens of other committed volunteers, look after everything from equipment and field maintenance to game scheduling and coach development. One of their primary concerns is the treatment, training, and retention of the association's umpires.

Umpire abuse is an ongoing problem for all of B.C.'s minor softball associations. Although both Softball BC and RMMSA have official policy statements condemning the verbal abuse of umpires, the problem continues. This report examines the results of our survey and interviews of practising umpires and our ethnographic analysis of Ridge Meadows' softball culture during game times.

The key objectives of our study were to determine:

- What can be done to reduce umpire harassment?
- Why do umpires leave the association?
- What can be done to retain umpires?

These problems are not unique to RMMSA, but to understand the extent of the problem of harassment we must first agree on its definition and recognize it in all of its forms. Once we define and identify harassment, it will be easier to introduce strategies to combat the high umpire turnover rate.

As part of our research, we not only reviewed literature examining how bullying and harassment play a role in umpire attrition, but also looked at how social factors, training, and personal and educational obligations affect umpire satisfaction and retention.

In order to reach our objectives, we conducted in-depth interviews with four members of the RMMSA umpiring staff and created an electronic umpire satisfaction survey composed of ten questions, which we sent to all umpires working in the Ridge Meadows association. Of the 34 survey recipients, 21 responded. We also conducted ethnographic research by observing and recording episodes of verbal or physical harassment of umpires during game times.

For the purpose of this report, our definitions of harassment are as follows:

**Verbal** harassment is all disrespectful language directed at the umpire including: shouting objections at decisions, questioning performance or competence, making discriminatory or biased remarks, shouting obscenities, repeating questions, or making negative comments that interrupt game play.

**Physical** harassment includes crowding or pushing the umpire, kicking dirt at them, or any physical contact to show disapproval or with intent to harm.

The results of our research are illustrated through graphs, tables, and quotes taken from interviews with umpires ranging in age from 13 to 23 years. The names of the participants have been kept confidential.

Eighty-four percent of the respondents to our survey indicated that they had experienced either verbal or verbal and physical harassment while officiating. Later, during our interviews, we were informed that attempting to influence and intimidate umpires is also an issue. Unfortunately this was not addressed in our survey.

The bulk of our research indicates that umpires are aware of what constitutes harassment, but ignore episodes of it in favour of keeping the game going. Age and experience influence how an umpire reacts to bullying. Our analysis yielded the following recommendations:

- encourage association members to be aware of the problem of umpire harassment
- erect anti-bullying signage at Albion and Telosky parks
- upgrade RMMSA's website to include definitions, information, and regulations against bullying
- continue training and supporting entry-level umpires to recognize and manage episodes of harassment

## Introduction

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Umpires and other sport officials face increasing verbal, and sometimes physical, pushback in response to calls made on the field of play. We welcome the chance to work with RMMSA in the effort to find ways to combat umpire harassment.

The literature, our research, and common knowledge indicate that bullying and harassment of officials exist in all genres of sport, including softball, hockey, and baseball. Awareness of what constitutes harassment is an important first step in combatting the problem.

In this report, we provide a concrete definition of harassment, define our objectives, explain our findings, and demonstrate what methodologies we used to gather our data. The results of our survey and ethnographical research are presented through graphic illustrations. We search for patterns and discuss the answers we received from our interviews. Finally, we present our recommendations — based on our collected data — for actions which RMMSA might take to combat umpire harassment and attrition.

## Objectives

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We want to discover why umpires leave RMMSA, what can be done to retain them, if umpires are being adversely affected by harassment, and what can be done to diminish (or eliminate) harassment. To achieve these goals, we contacted umpires within Ridge Meadows and invited them to share their opinions with us. We also read related literature on referee and umpire harassment and attrition in other associations and sports. The core questions we are attempting to answer are:

- Do umpires consider harassment to be a genuine problem?
- Who are the primary offenders?
- What would make an umpire's job better?
- Does the association support umpires in their job?
- What needs to be done to stop umpire harassment?

## Literature Review

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### Introduction

Umpires hold arguably the most important position in any game of softball. Often judged, cursed, and criticized, they've been told their highest form of praise is to go completely unnoticed. Psychologically, umpiring is not a job for people-pleasers or the faint of heart. Physically, it requires fitness, strength, lightning reflexes, and clear vision. Superior timing, consistency, stability, and an audible voice above the crowd are four more traits imperative for every umpire. Above all, they must assess situations and make decisions accurately and confidently.

Who is the average person starting out on this challenging profession? In RMMSA, she's a 12- or 13-year-old girl. Sport officiating is a stressful occupation to undertake at any age, let alone at such a vulnerable stage of life. Ridge Meadows is not alone in finding umpire retention an issue. We believe that the first step in combatting the turnover rate is to understand the reasons underlying the umpires' leaving.

In order to understand Ridge Meadows' situation better, we looked at a number of peer-reviewed articles which focused on umpire (and other sport official) harassment, attrition, and retention.

### Experience, attrition, and retention of officials

Warner, Tingle, and Kellett (2013), interviewed former basketball referees to find out why they quit and to learn about their experiences officiating in order to develop strategies for the retention of future referees. The writers communicated the rarity of gaining information "from individuals who choose to leave organizations due to the logistical difficulties of collecting data." (We, too, hoped to interview former RMMSA umpires, but were unable to due to time constraints and privacy issues.) Researchers discovered that many referees left their positions, not because of the abuse they received, though problematic, but because they "felt unprepared to deal with it" (Warner et al. 2013). Former referees in this study felt that they had not been trained to deal with volatile situations involving spectators, coaches, and players. Interestingly, the referees who stayed reported they had learned to cope with abuse by defusing with other referees who had experienced similar situations, not through training.

A related study exploring why female basketball officials left their positions bears consideration as we think about the current (all-female) entry-level umpires in

Ridge Meadows (Tingle, Warner, & Sartore-Baldwin, 2014). Women referees reported high incidences of disrespect, from not only coaches and spectators, but also from the male officials, they worked with. As RMMSA continues to recruit young females into this authoritative role, the likelihood of encountering similar problems is high. As one former official explained it, “Officiating can be so stressful. If you don’t have that (sense of family and community with fellow officials), it makes it all the more difficult to feel like you belong. And that’s a key thing for retention” (Tingle et al. 2014, p. 18).

While some studies point directly to acute stress and verbal abuse as primary indicators as to why officials leave their jobs (Anshel, Kang, & Jubenville, 2012 & Dosseville, Rioult, & Laborde, 2013), others focus more on the factors that encourage them to stay. One such study by Kellett and Warner (2011) is entitled “Creating communities that lead to retention: The social worlds and communities of umpires.” When umpires have a strong sense of community, the study revealed, they tend to stay longer and perform better at their work. The researchers also found that improving umpires’ technical skills (including how to handle harassment during games) directly correlated with an improved sense of belonging, job satisfaction, and retention.

## Methods

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### Survey

We developed a 10-question online survey, which we emailed to all 34 umpires in RMMSA. The anonymous survey collected respondents’ age, years umping, perceived stress levels while umping, and suggestions to combat harassment, or otherwise improve their experience on the plate. We were pleased that more than half responded, representing all age groups. The full results of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

### Interviews

We invited the same group of umpires to contact us and discuss their experiences in more detail. We are very grateful to the four who graciously gave up their time to speak with us. One of our interviewees was a first-year umpire in the youngest age bracket; two belonged in the 15 to 17 year age group, and one

in the 18 to 25 year range. While our small sampling of interviews cannot adequately represent the whole body of umpires who work with RMMSA, they do provide a revealing and informative look into the experiences and ideas of some. For a full list of questions and answers see Appendix D.

## Ethnography

Using a collection table, we observed the actual number of umpire harassments occurring in eight randomly selected Ridge Meadows games in July 2015. We witnessed several occasions where coaches, spectators, and players openly questioned the umpire's performance and competence, objected to the umpire's decisions, disrupted game flow, and made discriminatory remarks toward the umpire. See Appendix B.

## Results

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### Surveys

Not every person who completed the survey answered every question, but the majority did. The only information we had about this group of umpires prior to our survey was that 12 were over 19 years of age, and 22 were under 19. We have been told that many umpires quit sometime during their first year, and we will discuss some of the reasons for that later.

One of the first surprises was that three of the 19 who answered the question – “While officiating, have you ever experienced harassment?” – replied that they had never experienced it. Of these, two were in the 15 to 17 year age group and reported umping for one to five years. The other was between 13 and 14 and had been umping for less than a year.

This contradicts some of the comments we heard in interviews, namely that younger umps are more likely to be yelled at because of their inexperience. We also heard from an interviewee that some coaches are more likely to overstep their bounds by influencing and intimidating newer umpires. While it is encouraging to hear that a few of RMMSA's umps have never felt harassed, the overwhelming majority report the opposite.

The other surprising finding was the lack of correlation between the age and years umping with the degree of stress reported on the job. Of the youngest participants, most felt low to moderate stress. In the oldest group, stress was reported from low to very high. We had anticipated that the youngest group would report the most stress and the older, more seasoned umpires would report the lowest stress levels.

One of the more significant findings on our survey was the connection between feeling a sense of community and support from the association and reported levels of stress. While feeling the support of community is not a predictor of lower stress levels, there is some evidence here that suggests a link.

## Interviews

We interviewed four umpires from RMMSA. They ranged in age from 12 to 23 years and have been umpiring from one to ten years. The highest attrition rate among umpires is found during the first one to two years, so we were pleased to hear the feedback they offered.

All four umpires agreed that harassment and bullying of officials is a problem, although two of them said it hadn't been much of an issue for them personally. One interviewee told us that newer umpires are yelled at more because of their inexperience. When she first began officiating, her mother came to all her games – often to tell one particular coach to “back off.” She explained, “I didn't have the nerve to stick up for myself.”

When asked what RMMSA could do to stop harassment, one umpire said, “There is no way to stop harassment.” Questioned further, she described coaches as the worst offenders. “Aggressive coaches love to take over and intimidate umps, especially the young umps.”

All four umpires agreed that the first year officiating is the toughest to get through, but each umpire had different levels of tolerance. As was clearly pointed out, no one trains as an umpire expecting to be the target of harassment. Often the verbal abuse experienced during that first year is the impetus behind quitting.

As one umpire explained, “How do you deal with a coach questioning your call when he steps into your space? He's big and you're small.” The coach may not be aware that he is intimidating the umpire, but if he is invading her personal space and questioning her judgment, he is.

It is important to note that umpires sometimes quit simply because their lives have become too busy. Other reasons cited for leaving are:

- politics in the association
- drama among the executive
- it wasn't as exciting as they hoped it would be
- not enough games (work)

Another recurring thread during the interviews related to the care and feeding of umpires in between games. There was some discussion as to how other associations look after umpires by providing meals, unlimited water, tents, and chairs for umpire use during tournaments. A couple of our interviewees felt that Ridge Meadows came up short in comparison to Burnaby, Port Coquitlam, and Coquitlam.

We asked our interview subjects what they thought RMMSA could do to combat harassment. Their answers reinforced the results found in the final question of the online survey. All felt that the association should re-educate coaches regarding proper treatment of officiating staff. A significant number believed that early discussion and training on how to deal with harassment was necessary. The three umpires we spoke with who had more than five years' experience thought that it took about four years to begin to feel confident in their roles. As one umpire said, "If you get past five years, then it really helps develop who you are, like a life skill."

## Ethnography

We attended eight games in Ridge Meadows during the Summer Series and kept a record of all harassing comments directed at umpires. In several of the games, we were not aware of any. Others were not quite so civil. At one game, we heard a spectator yell, "How much are the Renegades paying you, Ump?" Objecting to the umpire's decisions and questioning the umpire's performance happened in more or less equal measure from spectators and coaches. See Appendix B.

## Conclusions

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While most of us would like to see umpire harassment a thing of the past, even our youngest interviewee told us "there is no way to stop it." We hope that she's at least partially wrong, and a good deal of it can and will be brought to an end.



There is compelling evidence to suggest that stronger deterrents for offenders and heightened awareness for all will do a great deal to help.

Many umpires leave for reasons the association can do nothing about. As previously stated, the challenging role of an umpire is not a job most people can handle. Young people try out various jobs and leave them when they don't turn out as expected. High turnover rates in the first year of umping will likely continue to be a problem no matter what changes the association makes.

Umpires who stay with RMMSA describe the executive and community as supportive and "like family." As the direction of the organization continues to be led by people who work for the benefit of the whole community, umpire retention is likely to increase.

## Recommendations

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### Harassment

Our interviews provided us with the richest source of answers to the question of how RMMSA can restrict umpire harassment. Though some of these suggestions may already be in place, we nevertheless submit the following proposals, which we gathered from the umpires themselves, as possible solutions:

- Provide training for new umpires which includes how to handle inappropriate comments and behaviour
- Provide training for coaches, which includes instructions on approaching umpires, understanding the rules for the particular level at which they are playing, using timeouts properly, etc.
- Inform parents and other spectators that umpire harassment will not be tolerated (create an environment where umpire harassment is just as unacceptable as smoking, spitting, or drinking at minor games)
- Create information pamphlets for parents and coaches outlining common problems umpires face and defining unacceptable behaviour
- Implement heavier penalties for coaches or spectators who do not comply (i.e. game suspensions)
- Set up signage at fields (see Appendix C for examples)

## Attrition

The answers to the questions of why umpires leave and what can be done to retain them are varied. Once again, our interviews provided us with the most insights. The answers we received from them combined with insights gleaned from articles on the subject are presented in the following table:

Table 1 Why do umpires quit?

Why Do Umpires Quit?		
Problem	Cause	Suggestion
Too busy	<b>A</b> Playing on a rep team <b>B</b> Homework <b>C</b> Other obligations	Make sure potential recruits understand the time commitment required to be an umpire
Getting yelled at by coaches and spectators	<b>A</b> Inexperience; making wrong calls <b>B</b> Aggressive and uncivil coaches and spectators <b>C</b> Ignorance	<b>A</b> More training, experience, and observation before plate umping <b>B</b> Stricter penalties, more education for coaches and spectators <b>C</b> Upgrade website to include definitions, information, and regulations against bullying
Don't get enough games	Scheduler perceived as not assigning games fairly and predictably	Have set protocol for scheduling umpires for games; make sure umpires are aware of the system
Other associations have more perks	<b>A</b> Burnaby and PoCo provide free meals, water, chairs, and tents <b>B</b> Coquitlam pays more	<b>A</b> Provide free food and water for umps scheduled to officiate more than one game per day <b>B</b> Does budget allow for pay increase? *
Umpiring is not what they thought it would be	<b>A</b> Umping Mites can be pretty unexciting <b>B</b> Let's face it: umpiring is a unique calling; it's not for everyone	Make sure potential recruits are forewarned of the drawbacks of learning to ump before they enlist

\*In fairness, none of the umpires we spoke with complained about the wages they receive from RMMSA. In fact, three of the four reported their pay was good.

## Retention

We realize that heaping more expectations and proposals on an already overloaded team of volunteer organizers is not in the best interests of anybody – either the umpires or the executive who manage their employment. However, we did receive some encouraging comments about the executive that make us think the organization is already on the right track and merely needs to be encouraged to continue to promote its own mission statement and goals.

One of our interviewees told us that as a player she was always involved in team bonding sessions – not just her own team but with other teams in the association. “They really try hard to be a big family,” she shared, and that ultimately created for her many friendships with players, coaches and members of the executive, which makes her umpiring job so much better.

Engagement with the RMMSA community coupled with a sense of belonging and family are key ingredients in umpires’ decision to stay in their position. This was backed up in the Warner et al. (2013) study where researchers found that both athletes and officials (and many umpires are athletes as well) are more likely to choose to remain in a sport where they share both on-field and off-field experiences. Another report entitled, “Umpire participation: Is abuse really the issue?” stressed that “the social world they share with other umpires, and identified social interactions among umpires” is “a key reason for continuing to umpire” (Kellett & Shilbury, 2013). In addition, “the social rewards of umpiring should be stressed in umpire recruitment and that the social world of umpiring should be incorporated into umpire training and retention” (Kellett & Shilbury, 2013).

Finally, we encourage the executive to consider updating their website to include easy-to-access policies and guidelines that promote zero tolerance on umpire abuse. For an example of this, see LWF Baseball Association website’s policy in Appendix F. RMMSA’s mission statement found on its home page could also be rewritten for precision and clarity.

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## Appendix A — Results of Survey Monkey umpire survey

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### Umpire age and experience

Q. 1

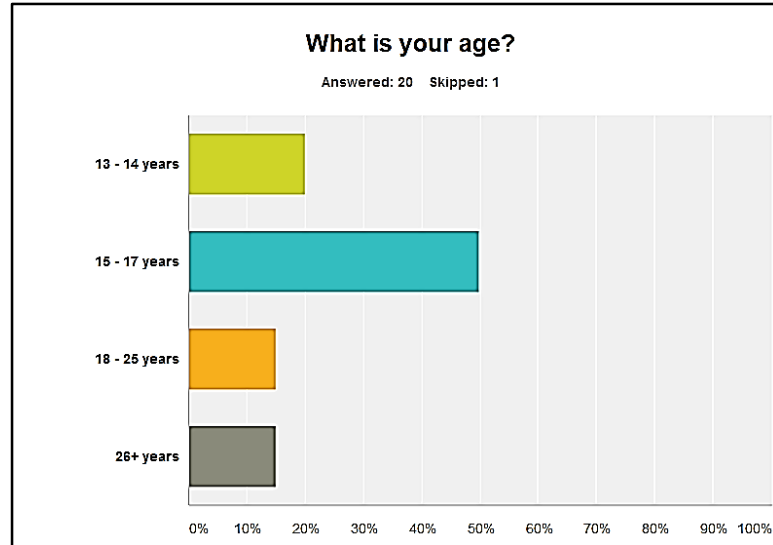


Figure 2 Q. 1

Q. 2

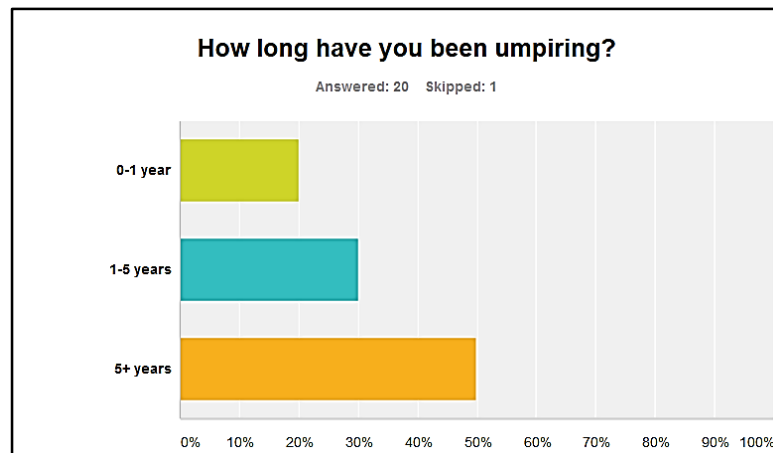


Figure 3 Q. 2

## Harassment type and number of episodes

Q. 3

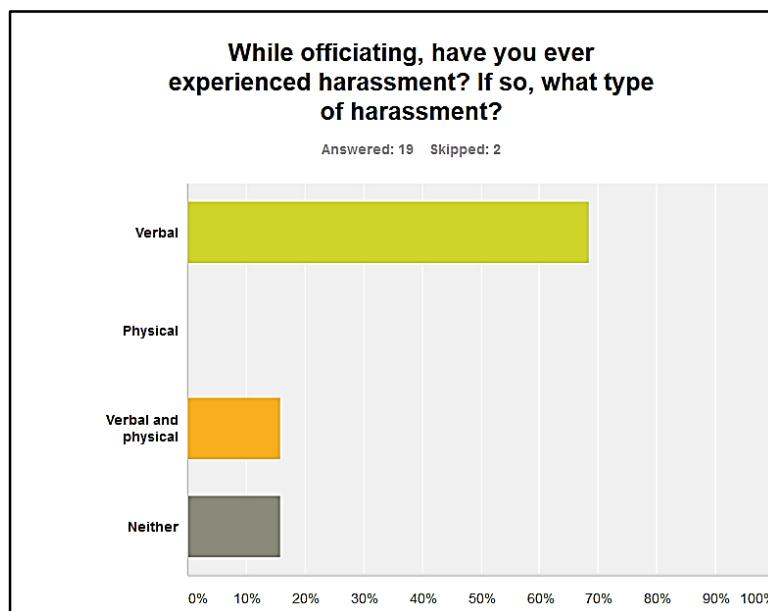


Figure 4 Q. 3

Q. 4

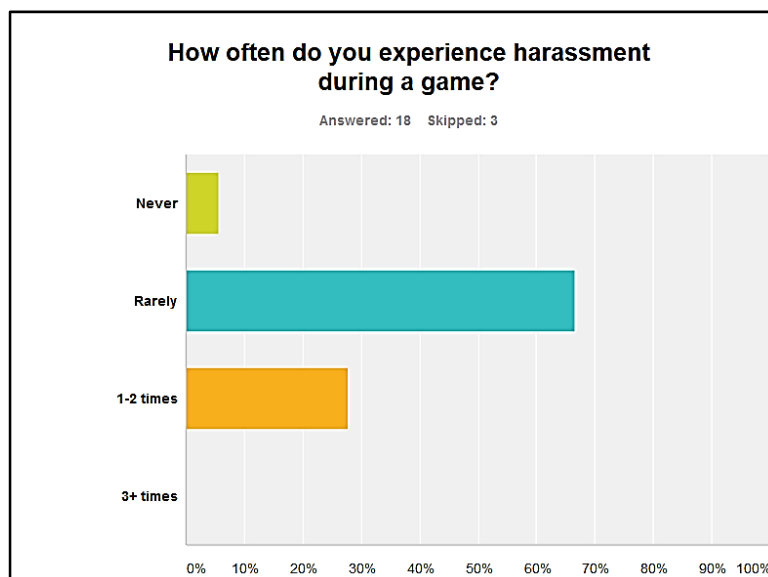


Figure 5 Q. 4

## Most likely to harass the umpires

Q. 5

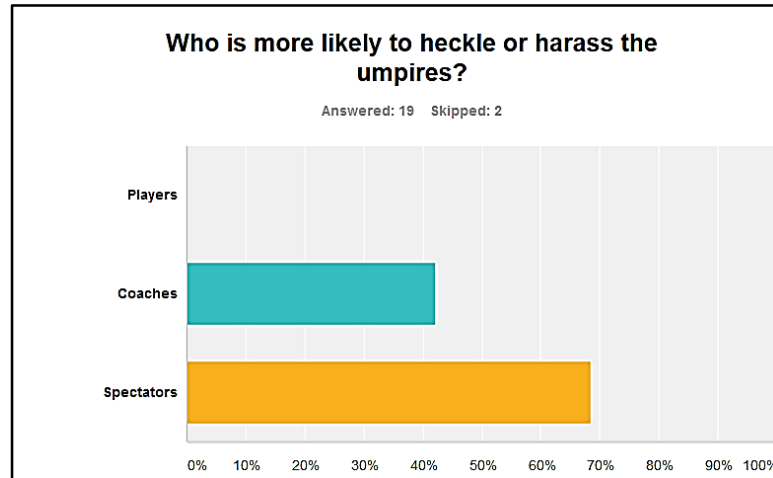


Figure 6 Q. 5

Q. 6

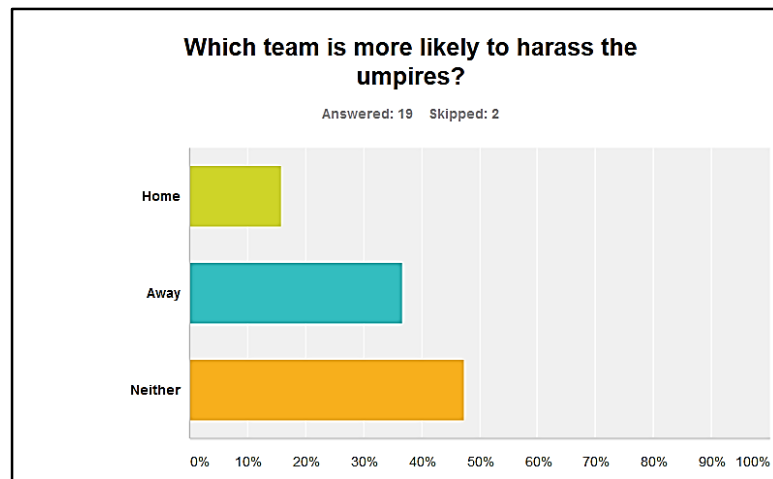


Figure 7 Q. 6



## Sense of community, level of stress, and perceived support from association

Q. 7

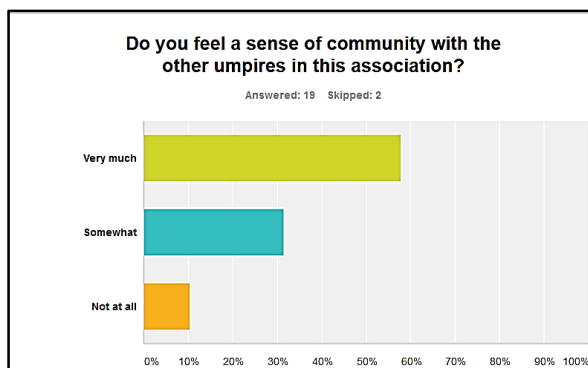


Figure 8 Q. 7

Q. 8

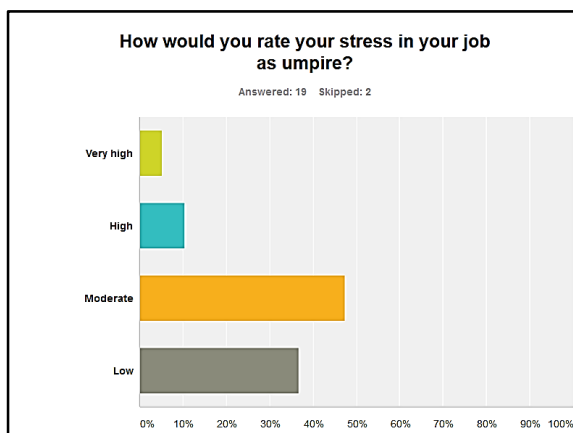


Figure 9 Q. 8

Q. 9

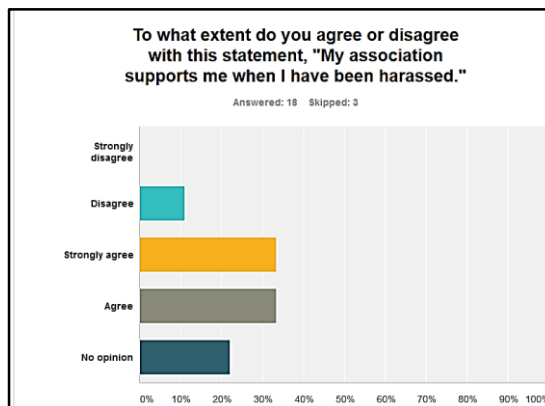


Figure 10 Q. 9

## Deterrents to harassment

Q. 10

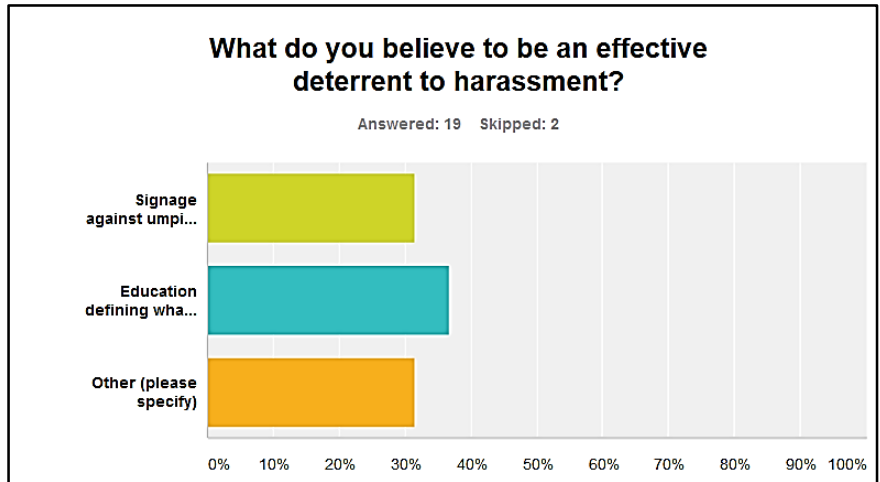


Figure 11 Q. 10

Individual respondents suggested:

- Allowing umpires to throw spectators out of the park
- Coaches/spectators not allowed at the field
- Tell coaches before games that there is zero tolerance for harassment, and if there is harassment, there will be consequences, meaning ejections or more severe punishments
- Right now, not a clue
- Having the coach suspended
- Both

## Appendix B — Collection table for ethnographical research

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### Collection table for witnessed umpire harassment

#### What to include as observations for this table:

##### Harassment by spectators:

- Jeering

  - Example — “Come on that was a strike.”

- Booing

- Loud criticism of umpire’s calls

  - Example — “Hey ump, is this your phone? It says three missed calls!”

- Directing personal remarks at the umpire —

  - Example — name calling, swearing

##### Harassment by coach:

- Jeering

  - Example — “That was a strike.”

- Coach makes the calls from the sidelines

  - Example — “Safe.” “Out.”

- Kicking dirt at the umpire

- Swearing at the umpire

- Poking fingers in umpire’s face

- Strategizing with team to get revenge on umpire —

  - Example — catcher steps aside, intentionally failing to protect umpire from pitch

##### Harassment by players:

- Questioning umpire’s calls

- Swearing at the umpire

- Intentionally not protecting the umpire from being injured by a pitch

## Collection table of witnessed umpire harassment

### Games watched:

Tick one box per each game observed

✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Witnessed behaviours	Players	Spectators	Coaches
Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pushing umpire</li> <li>Crowding umpire</li> </ul>			
Questioning umpire's performance or competence			✓
Objecting to umpire's decisions		✓ ✓	
Objecting to umpire's decisions that disrupt game flow		✓	✓
Discriminatory, negative, or biased remarks			
Discriminatory, negative, or biased remarks that disrupt game flow			
Obscenities			

### If desired, record description of observation here

No way! Come on!
You have to watch the leadoffs!
Booing
Coach engaging in prolonged visit with the pitcher

Table 12 Collection table of witnesses umpire harassment

## Appendix C — Examples of anti-harassment signage adopted by other associations

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Figure 13

“Do not dump on the ump” sign posted by North Delta Softball Association



Figure 14

Sign posted at a ball diamond in Buffalo Grove, Illinois



Figure 15

Sign on a backstop used by Westford Youth Baseball & Softball League

## Appendix D — Compilation of interview Q & A results

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Q. 1 & 2      How long have you been umpiring?

Have you ever experienced harassment? Was it verbal, or physical?

	Umpire 1	Umpire 2	Umpire 3	Umpire 4
Years umpiring	5	1	5	10
Verbal harassment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Physical harassment	Yes	No	No	Yes

Table 16 Interview Q. 1 & 2

Q. 3      What would you describe as harassment?

➤ Verbal:

- “That’s all right. The strike zone was bad.” The parent was sitting in a place that they could not possibly see the strike zone.
- Swearing at umpire.

➤ Physical:

- A coach puts a hand on the umpire’s shoulder.
- A coach kicks dirt or stones at an umpire.



Q. 4 In which division – House, A, or B – do you find the most umpire harassment?

	Umpire 1	Umpire 2	Umpire 3	Umpire 4
House				✓
Rep A		✓		
Rep B	✓	✓		

Table 17 Interview Q. 4

Q. 5 At what point do you stop the game and confront heckling?

- *“Spectators or parents have yelled all kinds of annoying things at me. I ignore them, or turn around and stare at them, never confront them.”*
- *“Once it gets personal. Most of the time they’re not yelling at you; they’re yelling at your uniform.”* She recounts a situation where spectators heckled an umpire, calling out his name. *“I’m like, okay, coach, either control your parents, or you’re (the whole team) out of here.”*

Q. 6 Do you believe that the pestering of umpires is a problem?

All four umpires agree harassment is a problem.

Q. 7 What do you do when players, spectators, or fans become increasingly verbally aggressive during a game?

- *“If they (spectators) want to heckle enough that the coach has to leave, then their team can forfeit. I’ve ejected coaches for swearing on the field.”*
- *“I approach the coach and say, ‘You know that so and so, or someone on your bench, or you, are saying something inappropriate. Speak to them, otherwise this is your only warning, and you’ll be gone from the game. Coaches, I give one warning to. I might give two to a spectator, but I only give one warning to a coach. If they do something even remotely, one more time, then they’re gone.’”*

Q. 8 What makes you keep umpiring?

	Umpire 1	Umpire 2	Umpire 3	Umpire 4
Money	✓	✓	✓	
Love of the game	✓			✓

Table 18 Interview Q. 8

Q. 9 Are you ever complimented for calling a good game?

- *“Bill is an encouraging guy.”*  
The plate umpires encourage her. When she was yelled at, the base umpire told her it was a great call.
- *“Oh, yeah, Bill says the best compliment you can get is they don’t notice that you’re there.”*
- *“Yeah, nowadays, most of the comments are from coaches saying, ‘Thank you, good game.’ It would be nice if those coaches talked to the Umpire-in-chief, or the association... we hear so much about the other half of it, when you don’t call a good game. When you do, they (the coaches) never talk to them. ... You hear about when something bad happens, like, oh that umpire screwed up bad, but you don’t hear that they (the umpire) just had five good games and everyone loved them. Maybe they just had a bad day and they weren’t calling great, you know.”*

Q. 10 Name three things that would make your job better.



Figure 19 Interview Q. 10

**All the umpires wished they could throw spectators out of the park.**

Q. 11 Why do you believe the association's umpires leave their jobs?

- Politics within RMMSA
- Drama amongst the executive
- Unequal distribution of games
- General busy-ness with life
- Umpires quit in their first year because *"they're young and new. It's not for everyone... You get yelled at because of your inexperience."*

Q. 12 What assistance from the association lets you perform your duties to the best of your abilities?

- The senior umpires wander around, watch, offer help, and answer questions.
- *"They pay me."*

Q. 13 What do **you** think RMMSA can do to stop umpire harassment and retain umpires?

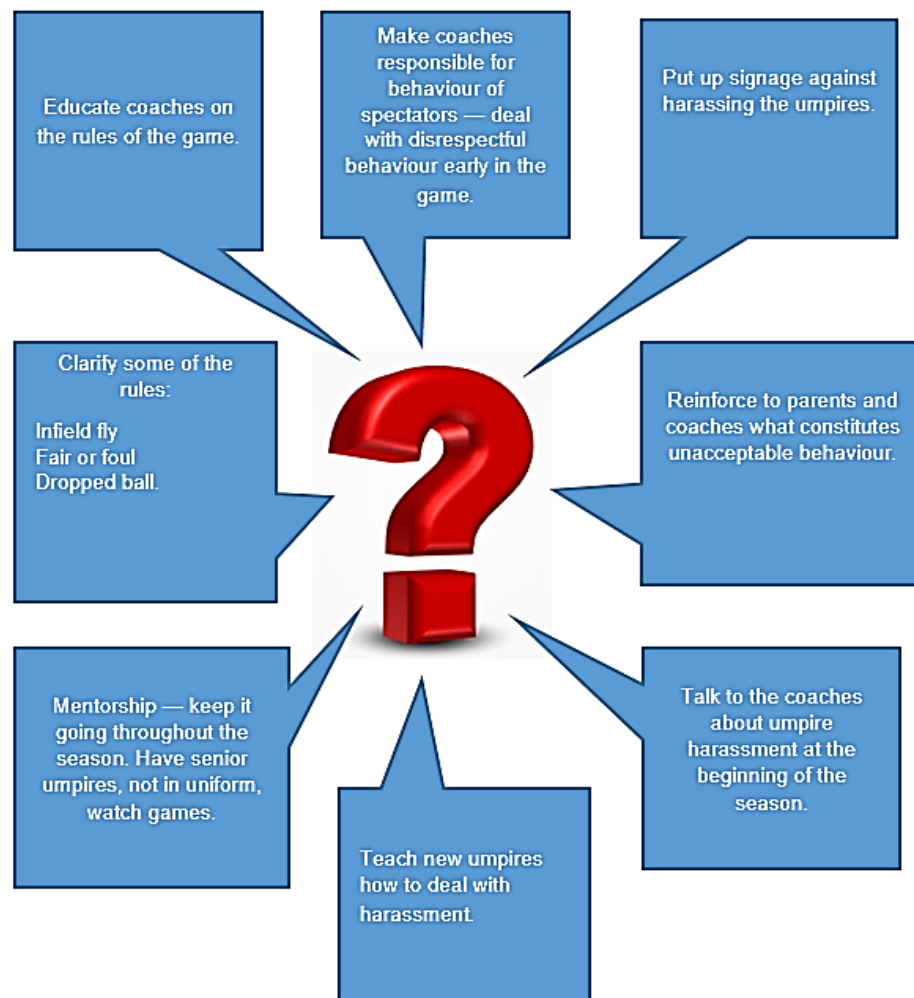


Figure 20 Interview Q. 13

## Appendix E — Consent form

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### Study of Umpire Attrition, Harassment and Retention Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a survey exploring how harassment affects your role as umpire. The researchers, Jean Manky and Carol Kinnee, professional writing students, are asking you to take part because you are, or have been, umpires in RMMSA. The survey will be conducted from June 27-July 14.

#### What this study is about

The goal of this study is to understand what role, if any, umpire harassment plays in umpires leaving the association, and what suggestions participants have to improve their experience on the field.

#### What your volunteer participation will involve

If you agree to take part in this study:

- You may be asked to participate in a short interview. The questions in this interview will include the length of your umpiring experience, what you consider umpire abuse, how you deal with umpire harassment during game situations, and what you believe can be done to make your job better.
- All study participants will be asked to fill out a brief online survey on harassment and umpiring.

#### Risks, benefits and confidentiality

This survey is anonymous. All data collected is confidential. If you choose to participate in an interview, your name will not be recorded, or given to anyone else. The online survey using Survey Monkey® does not identify survey respondents.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You will not be penalized or adversely affected in any way should you decline to participate, withdraw from the study (even after giving initial consent), refuse to answer particular questions, or refuse to participate in a portion of the study. Participating allows you to share your views or experiences regarding umpire harassment in softball.

## Use of survey results

The results of this study will be used to determine ways RMMSA can work towards eliminating umpire harassment, diminish attrition, and increase job satisfaction among its umpires.

## Compensation

While there is no specific remuneration or compensation for taking part in this study, the researchers would like to provide a \$5 Tim Hortons card as a token of appreciation. Of all those interviewed, two will be randomly selected to also receive one of two gifts: A \$20 Tim Hortons gift card or four baseball tickets to see the Vancouver Canadians play at Nat Bailey Stadium this summer.

At the conclusion of this study, the information collected will be stored for one month. All data collected will be destroyed September 1, 2015.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the project, the methods used in the study or your treatment as a participant, please contact Jean Manky, [jmmanky@yahoo.com](mailto:jmmanky@yahoo.com) (778)-885-3747 or Carol Kinnee [kinnee1@gmail.com](mailto:kinnee1@gmail.com) (604)-302-0540 **and** the Douglas College Research Board Chair – Dr. Kathy Denton, phone: (604)-527-5300, email: [dentonk@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:dentonk@douglas.bc.ca)

## Statement of Consent

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understood the information stated above. I have been given an opportunity to have all my questions and concerns answered fully. I agree to participate in this study and indicate my consent by signing below.

Signature of Participant

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Date

Co-Signature (if required e.g. witness)

---

Date

## Appendix F – LWF's Policy Statement on Umpire Abuse

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### ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY ON UMPIRE ABUSE

"Zero Tolerance Policy" should read: "Ensuring a fair, safe, healthy and fun game environment is our top priority." Sackville Minor Baseball Association has adopted a zero-tolerance policy for arguing judgement calls, umpire abuse or call-related displays of poor sportsmanship. The Zero Tolerance Policy of Umpire Abuse highlights the special circumstances for youth players as umpires.

One of the founding principles of Sackville Minor Baseball is positive coaching, this includes umpires that work on all fields.

Youth/adult umpires should only be talked to positively and constructively. Coaches will not challenge judgement calls made by the umpires. **It is acceptable to question the interpretation of a rule, but only in a courteous non-confrontational manner.**

**Umpire Abuse as Defined in this Policy** - *umpire abuse at its simplest is defined as any deliberate action that makes an umpire feel physically threatened, verbally intimidated or emotionally humiliated. Disrespectfully objecting to calls, yelling at, publicly calling, constantly disagreeing with an umpire by action or verbally can be deemed umpire abuse. Coaches should always show decorum, respect and observe all game rules whenever questioning an umpire about a call.*

**Judgement Calls** - *a judgement call is a decision made by an official in a competition using their own opinion of what they have seen. An umpire's judgement call is final. Most calls are based on the judgement of the umpire ie. You may see it one way and the umpire may see it differently. Missed calls are going to happen in every game, that's baseball. Judgement calls include; balls & strikes, safe/ out calls on bases (force and tag), catch/ no catch calls, fair/foul, etc. **For reference only** - non-judgement calls include; interference, base runners hit by batted balls, etc.*



Guidelines for disciplinary action range from a written reprimand for verbal abuse to expulsion from Sackville Minor Baseball for flagrant or repeat offenders. The details are outlined in the policy below.

**Purpose of the Policy** This policy has been implemented to eliminate umpire abuse, both physical and verbal, and to discourage public dissent of an umpire on all fields. Even though public dissent may not be considered abuse, it is not in keeping with Sackville Minor Baseball principles of positive coaching and good sportsmanship and therefore will not be tolerated.

It is never acceptable to verbally abuse an umpire in any situation. There are appropriate avenues for coaches and spectators to share concerns about the quality of officiating. The local area Umpire-in-Chief (**BNSUD.com**) is welcome to hear any constructive comments on umpires. **Any criticism or critique relating to the performance of a youth umpire should be communicated to the youth umpire only by the Umpire-in-Chief.**

Youth umpires are an integral part of the Sackville Minor Baseball program. This includes development of all youth umpires. All Sackville Minor Baseball guidelines and policies on providing a Safe, Fair and Fun environment for players also apply to our umpires. Only Positive, Instructive, and Encouraging comments are allowed to be directed at both players and umpires. Verbal abuse of umpires is as unacceptable as verbal abuse of youth players. The purpose of this policy is to make clear that abuse (as defined in this policy) of any umpire is unacceptable, and to adopt basic standard sanctions for improper conduct based on a "three-strikes-you're-out" framework.

This policy is not intended to imply that the umpire is always right and the adult spectator/coach is always wrong. We must simply remember that just as youth players will make mistakes during play, adult/youth umpires will also make mistakes in officiating, particularly in the younger divisions where they are learning how to

umpire. Please remember, young umpires receive minimal instruction before being sent out to officiate. Also, please keep in mind that they do not attend practices nor do they have a coach on the field to guide them from game to game. Given that the rules of baseball are numerous and in any given game many difficult scenarios could unfold, it is in all of our best interests to judge officials fairly and with reasonable expectations. After all, we cannot play this game without these courageous individuals.

**Disciplinary Guidelines** The penalties for any confirmed case of umpire abuse by coach/adult team member and/or parent/spectator on all fields will be;

- 1<sup>st</sup> Incident - Disciplinary Committee reprimand in writing.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Incident - 3 game suspension for a coach/adult team member; 3 games for parent/spectator regardless of past history, coaching experience or program involvement. This suspension will be IN ADDITION to any suspension due to an ejection from a game.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident - Season ending ban for any offending person. (Includes attendance at remaining games on all fields)

Ejected coaches are not permitted to remain on the surrounding field areas, including grandstands, and must vacate all field areas in a timely manner.

In addition, if a coach confronts an umpire after a game in order to continue verbally abusing an official, the penalties will include a 3 game suspension for the 1<sup>st</sup> incident and 6 games for the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Any incident that involves physical abuse by bodily threatening, shoving, bumping or harming a youth will result in an immediate indefinite suspension and notification of proper authorities. A manager or coach wishing to be reinstated must appear before the Disciplinary Committee for a hearing.

The Sackville Minor Baseball Executive Board will enforce any and all disciplinary action. The Disciplinary Committee will consist of

the residing President along with a minimum of 2 additional members of the current Executive. The Umpire Coordinator will follow-up to ensure the offending spectator or coach is not in attendance of any of the games during his/her suspension.

All Sackville Minor Baseball Association members are bound to report any incident of abuse of umpires to the Sackville Board within 24 hours of the incident occurring (if possible).

The Disciplinary Committee, upon investigating the incident and after hearing from all parties, shall implement any appropriate penalties before the next game (if possible). The offending persons, board members, and the Umpire Coordinator shall be notified of any disciplinary action.