

As you all are aware, long serving ISF National Director of Umpiring Merle Butler passed away on the 6<sup>th</sup> January. Merle was held in high regard by SNZ and our umpires and had contributed much to the development of umpiring in New Zealand. He will be sadly missed. We also take this opportunity to extend our support to Bob Stanton from Canada who takes over from Merle as ISF NDU.

The first round of National Tournaments and National League games are now behind us. I have had the pleasure of seeing many of you in action on the diamond and for those I have not seen your progress has been followed through the reports submitted by all Tournament Chief Umpires. The game is always changing and rejuvenating and so is umpiring. Many of you were given an opportunity and asked to **“Pike Ake”** (Step-up). We hope you have enjoyed that challenge as much as we have in seeing the positive responses from so many umpires. Keep-up with the challenge, as much personnel enjoyment can come from officiating to the very best level you can. I would also like to acknowledge and thank our overseas guests Rich Silva, USA (ISC Exchange) and Niema Mosbascheri, ISF, Germany for their contributions both on and off the diamond.

At the Men's Provincials, we said farewell to Michael Smeath, who is to move with his family to Australia. After in Region consultation I am pleased to announce that Bill Smith will take over from Michael as Regional Director of Umpiring for the Northern Region. An announcement on who will be added to the Level 7 Group to replace Michael will follow next month. This season a record 30 candidates applied for field examination. I am very pleased to list the names of the successful candidates to date. **Level 3 NZ Qualifying:** Arnya Rodgers, Brian Kairau, Chris Radford (AK), Barry and Coral Hedley, Ken Muir (ML), Kevin Tippet (NN), Peter Wilson, Duncan Watts (OG), Hinemoa Sidney (PB), Hutana Campbell, Willy Hunapo (WK). **Level 4 NZ Badge:** Dave Fortin (CB), Darrel Paul, Marc Chapman (HB), John Hardie, Phillip Packer (HV), Ross Emerson (NO), Leigh Pere-Campbell (WK).

The latest National Tournament Appointment, Examination and Travel/Accommodation Schedules, Issue E and appointments to the National League Finals have been emailed to Association contacts and are posted on our website. SNZ have nearly finalized travel and accommodation details. Air travel ET's will be emailed by SNZ to each umpire as soon as received.

Much is happening on the International front. Under this season's Trans Tasman exchange, Jeremy England will attend the Men's Provincial Tournament in Australia whilst Warren Duff and Kevin Broomhall attend our Men's Open. Wiremu Tamaki will attend a Women's International series in Australia as part of his Olympic build-up. SNZ's recommendations for our Umpire to the ISF Junior Men's World Championship are with ISF and await their announcement. Expressions of Interest (EOI) have been received for the ISC Exchange umpire to attend the World Tournament, USA in August. An announcement on this appointment can be expected next month.

We welcome our **Oceania** colleagues to **UICNews** and advise that the Umpires clinics scheduled for Samoa, late February and Papua New Guinea in March have now been finalized. Details have been posted to the ISF website and the Oceania page on the SNZ umpires website. Nicky Ogier (NZ) will facilitate the Samoa clinic while Andrew Rindfleish (UIC-Australia) will facilitate in Papua New Guinea. In April we have the **Oceania** Men's World Championship Qualifier to be played in Auckland. Following World Championship Qualifier tradition we can expect eight currently certified ISF umpires to be appointed from within the **Oceania** Region. EOI's have been called for from currently certified ISF umpires. Once National Federation recommendations have been received and approved by ISF the successful list of umpires will be advised.

Our regular visitors to the website will have noticed there have been major changes. We have some way to go before we completed this exercise and I thank you for your patience in the mean time as much is still to be posted. Should you require any assistance on umpiring matters don't hesitate to contact your Local Chief Umpire (in the first instance) or your Regional Director of Umpiring. We hope you all have a pleasant experience umpiring for the remainder of the season.

**Wayne Saunders**  
**Umpire-in-Chief**