

Doug Schultz our Honorary Vice-Chairperson Celebrating Fifty Years in Blue



Can you remember what you were doing in the summer of 1967? Montreal was hosting Expo 67, Canada was turning one hundred and teenagers everywhere were listening to the Beatles newest album Sgt. Pepper's Lonely-Hearts Club Band. That was also the summer Doug Schultz was setting foot on the diamond for the first time wearing the umpire's blue. Who would have known that umpiring in that Saskatoon Men's D division game (for which he got paid 90 cents) would turn into almost 5000 more and a tremendously rewarding career as a softball official?

Doug's love for the game was obvious right from the time he began playing in the sixties in Saskatoon for the Frozen Foods Penguins under Chuck Porter. One of his most interesting playing experiences was playing in a Donkey Ball tournament in Warman. A touring group supplied the donkey and after you hit the ball you would have to jump on the donkey and ride it to first base.

His playing experience came in handy in his second career in softball. Under the mentorship of Eugene Hearne who supervised the lower men's divisions in Saskatoon, Doug immediately began doing the plate and bases and many one-man games. He worked for Hearne until The Saskatoon Softball Umpire Association (S.S.U.A) was formed in 1972 with the amalgamation of the group led by Ed Bitz and the Hearne's group. The Hearne group had been working the lower divisions of the S.A.S.A. and the Industrial

League, etc. while the Bitz group worked Sr. A Men's and the Special Men's division. They had 43 members of which about 24 were rated to do Sr. B Men's or higher. For Schultz, every one of those umpires had some sort of impact on him. He estimates he has worked with about 1200 umpires over the length of his career. Doug was part of the many key changes in the umpire organizations in the last 50 years. He saw the Saskatoon Umpire Association changed to Hub City Umpires which later changed into the Bridge City Umpires when the minor and adult umpire's associations split. Recently Doug became part the Saskatoon Bridge City Umpires when the adult and minor umpires re-united.

Over the years Doug has worked with some of Saskatoon and Canada's greatest umpires including: Ed Bitz who was the first Softball Canada Umpire In Chief (1972-1984), as well as Saskatoon Sports Hall of Famers Ed Reimer, Harvey Hildebrandt and Dave Moore. Although always very humble, he was willing to share what he feels are some of his of his accomplishments on the diamond. Somewhere near the top was doing the plate for the final game of the 1984 Canadian Sr. Women's gold medal game won by Ontario's Milverton-Dorchester. He has also umpired in the what many believe the most memorable Senior Men's championship ever in 1980, when 13 Canadian championships records were broke in what may have been the finest display of pitching ever at a Canadian

championship. Saskatoon's hosting that championship was in doubt earlier in the summer when, according to Schultz, he was forced to stay home from an exhibition Series with Team Canada in June as he estimated, enough snow came down to shut things down for almost a week. Doug was also part of the highlight game for the first season of Gordie Howe Softball field – now renamed Joe Gallagher Field. Doug worked the bases when Eddie Feigner and the King and His Court made a return visit to Saskatoon and lost a rare game to pitchers Pete Zacharias and Red Friesen of the Saskatoon College Lads in front of more than 2,500 people. On the lighter side, he remembers doing a Team Canada exhibition series in Saskatoon in the early 80's and taking a ball off the head on a throw from the outfield as he was moving to get to third base. He was a little groggy for a while but he finished his duties in spite the injury.



Doug has umpired some of the greats of local softball. He says the hardest pitcher to work the plate for was Gene McWillie. According to Schutz, he had a pretty tight strike zone and Geno who threw as fast as 89 miles an hour really liked the high strike. Doug would not give it to him so Geno would give him the stare. He was also behind the plate for other great pitchers like Rob Guenter and Peter Froese. He even worked some orthodox pitchers like Ollie Fiddler and Joe Gallagher in his early days. He has mixed memories of working the plate for Marvel O'Donnell of the Saskatoon Imperials. "She was so slow getting the ball to the plate, she made every batter wait. Even though it took a while for her to deliver each pitch Schultz says all those ladies games at the old Kinsmen Park were

done in an hour to an hour and a quarter". Doug also remembers some of the real characters who coached around the city and occasionally had disagreements with him. One of the hardest to handle was Chris Wright who was always yelling at him. Another real character that he came across was Saskatoon Sports Hall of Famer Bob Stayner. Stayner would come running out to you yelling and screaming and when he got close he would tell you a joke. In one of many very hard-fought ladies provincial championships between Saskatoon Harmony Centers and Lashburn Bluebirds, Stayner told Schultz after the game it may have been a good thing he got tossed, so that way he could keep out of sight and have a smoke to relax him during the excitement of the game.

At 78, Doug is still going. For most of the last 30 years Doug has acted as the assignor for the Saskatoon Amateur Softball Association. He said he thought about retiring - leaving his hat on second base after the men's nationals, but he just can't do it. "As long as I have my health, I will keep going. My fellow umpires are like my family. We all help each other. Right from Ed Bitz's time, we have taught each other that we all have to be teachers as we are all blue". He doesn't just talk the talk. He feels his greatest memories of the sport have been in helping develop new umpires. He loves to see them get involved and especially stay in the program. He knows the important role mentorship plays in this process. Saskatoon has many umpires who are in the 25 years plus in experience range, all of whom has taken advantage of the leadership of those who were willing to pass on their knowledge. Schultz has been instrumental over the years in not only the development of these umpires, but also in helping them find and work with, inexperienced umpires. This year, veteran mentor umpires did 68 minor softball games. Thus, every night Saskatoon Minor had at least 2 senior umpires working to develop young umpires.

There is no doubt Doug has slowed down. He has had some health issues and he does not move nearly as well as those days when he took the ball off the side of his head. However, the passion for the job still burns. He has always been willing to develop local officials. He has been a source of inspiration for everyone associated with the sport, as just 2 years from his 80th birthday, he has had one of his busier years in a while. For 50 years he has been part of Saskatoon softball history, and still plays a valuable role in it's future.