

World Series Notebook

Calling balls and strikes during a World Series is a dream for many umpires. Darold Loyer of Belleville is no exception.

Loyer, 57, has been umpiring for 19 years, but length of service is no guarantee an ump will get the nod to work a World Series. Umpires have to pay their dues, working district tournaments, state tournaments and regional tournaments before getting considered for the world tournament.

Loyer, who is employed as a machinist/welder/fabricator, has umpired a state tournament in every boys and girls division but Big League boys. He umped the Central Regional Tournament twice in Fort Wayne, Indiana, including 2008.

And this year, he's among the 16 umpires who are volunteering their time to work the Junior League World Series in Taylor.

For years, Loyer has had plenty of family ties to the World Series. His sister Darlene Gerick and her husband Ron are is part of the statistician crew. Ron's late father, Andy Gerick, was the official scorer of the series from its inception to his death last year. Brothers Steve and Jim Gerick have succeeded their father.

Darold's other sister, Diane Bilbrey, surprised her brother by traveling from her home in Bogata, Columbia, South America, to watch him work the series.

By the way, Director of Umpires George Glick announced that the umpires working this year's World Series have 391 years of experience. He estimated that they have called balls and strikes in nearly 32,000 games.

A Pair of Threes

An interesting coincidence occurred during the Saipan-Italy game Sunday night.

Thelma Mizer – only the third woman to manage a team in the Junior League World Series – was in charge of the Asia-Pacific champions from Saipan.

And Lori Cook of Vancouver, Washington – only the third woman to umpire in the Junior League World Series – was on the right field line.

Right on, Game On

Every year, more local businesses get involved in the Junior League World Series. This year, Game On Sports Center of Taylor was among those showing support for the international tournament.

Game On offered each visiting team two hours of free indoor batting practice. Each player received a 2-for-1 coupon to return with family members and friends.

In addition, Marketing Director John David Critchfield and other employees have been distributing flyers at World Series Field at Heritage Park and making appearances at the hospitality suite at the host Ramada hotel.

"We want to be part of the community and this great community event," said Game On General Manager Scot Murdoch. "We'd like to get the kids in and improve their skills. A lot of teams have traveled over 1,000 miles to get here. We want to do our part."

Critchfield added: "I love this international event in Taylor. You get the four corners of the world and teams from across the United States in Taylor. How often does that happen?"

Is '09 their year?

Back in the state tournament in Portage, Indiana, Austin Moniot gave his Indiana teammates a laugh. Coach Jim Grusy recalls the day that the snazzy black state tournament T-shirts were distributed. Each contained large "09" lettering on the back to signify 2009.

Moniot rifled through the T-shirts.

"He said, 'I want number two – that's my jersey number. Why is there no number two?'" Grusy said.

Weeks later, Moniot and his teammates all showed up in Taylor wearing the "09" T-shirts.

-- Dave Gorgon