**-Earl Smith Responses**

**Q #1**

**Over the last couple of years, NBUA has taken on games for age groups below the age of 13.  Do you feel this is appropriate and if so why and if not appropriate?  Why not?**

**A #1**

**The NBUA is a business, and it is smart business to establish relationships with clients that require umpires. I do believe that this level of baseball is appropriate for our newer members to be dispatched to. We make ourselves available to work, the fact that we might get dispatched to younger age groups is part of membership in our association. I do believe that these games should be assigned with some discretion. If we find that we have coverage issues, then the Association can decide whether or not to drop our lowest age group clients.**

**Q #2**

**I’m proud to be associated with the NBUA. I think the Board has done a fantastic job and improved many things. Tell the membership why you’re proud of our organization and how will you help recruit new members because we need new men and women to join NBUA?**

**A #2**

**I am proud of our organization primarily because of the umpires we have assembled, and the fact that anyone who strives to get better, does get better with the wealth of knowledge our membership base holds. I have brought in new members, and I have participated in high school outreach to student athletes with the message of when you leave the sport as a player, consider coming back as an official. I have advertised** **our association at my gym, and at local gyms in my area. Every effort helps, and every member should attempt to get our message and need out there in environments that will draw desirable apprentices.**

**Q #3**

**So as in our evaluation process, one good thing and one thing to work on.  I would like for each candidate to give one good thing they want to bring to the NBUA (very specific) and one thing they feel the Board needs to work on to make it better.**

**A #3**

**I think our Board does a good job in umpire development. There will always be friction when you try to impart constructive criticism to a type “A” personality, but in the long run, if you HEAR the feedback, you will improve.**

**One thing I think the Board should consider is written contracts for all of our clients, that specifically state a value that we will accept in arrears. If our clients do not remain current, or within our fiduciary boundary guidelines, we should not provide umpire services until they comply.**

**Q #4**

**I’ve read all your statements. Please be more clear to what you see is wrong with NBUA, what is RIGHT with NBUA. What do you propose to help make all of us “AN EVEN BETTER ORGANIZATION??? “**

**A #4**

**I would like to personally bring an equity to my evaluation of other umpires. I believe that partner evaluations are an indicator to get an experienced third-party evaluator on the fence. This is what is right with the NBUA, and I choose evaluations because this is where I would like to focus my efforts. No evaluation process will be good enough for all, but when an evaluator with a baseball pedigree far beyond yours gives you feedback, you might want to HEAR that feedback. I want my evaluations to be imparted so that they are listened to, not argued.**

**What does the NBUA do wrong? I do not see glaring problems with our association. If you have been members of other associations, you can appreciate what the NBUA does. My only concerns are with our business model and protecting ourselves. We are independent contractors and as such, we have precious few safeguards of our “earnings”. I would only suggest we take steps to insulate ourselves from situations like the one we found ourselves in at the end of the 2017 season.**

**Q #5**

**What would you like to accomplish as a Board member?   Be very specific.**

**A #5**

**I want our membership to have some faith in the evaluation process. I want those that I evaluate to feel like they were observed with a keen eye, and that the feedback from that process has a value to them. I have been on a baseball field where the athleticism and the pace of the game was faster than anything I have ever seen. You are mentally prepared and physically able to perform at that level, or you are not. When you are not, you are in for a LONG GAME. I want our umpires to really be honest with themselves about where they are, where they want to be, and take that aspiration and prepare for the next level. There has to be some ownership, especially as officials. We see every day the effects of a bad attitude and blaming others. We need to have the courage to give constructive criticism to each other, and we need to own what we say.**

**Q #6**

**Umpires come and go every year & retention seems to be an issue! I don’t think I’m wrong. No lack of games! How do you propose we market ourselves better to recruit new guys! I’m not getting any younger! How do we keep our guys?**

**A #6**

**This is pandemic sports wide. It has many problems. The most valuable thing we can give is our time. Compensation is part of the answer. We all know that if we are committed to our process, we have drive-time, game time, pre and post-game time to consider. We aren’t getting rich. We need to dedicate some serious training discussions to preparing new members for the friction and attitudes they will encounter from players, coaches, and fans. Unfortunately, it is a condoned societal behavior these days and we have to mitigate it on the baseball field. If our umpires do not have the tools to handle the friction effectively, they will walk away disgruntled and frustrated.**

**We need to consider social media advertising in the western Washington demographic. Maybe radio…we need to begin to dedicate seed money and decide where best to spend it. We all try word of mouth, and perhaps flyers and recruitment business cards. We need to reach out to the little league ranks and draw those volunteers that want to stay involved beyond the fact that the children will age out. We are frowned upon as “stealing” volunteers, that needs to change. We are developing umpires, and the funny thing about volunteers is that they continue to volunteer. Outreach at the student athlete summit at Garfiled HS was an outside the box idea that we were invited to. We need to foster those types of outreach at gatherings that make sense. Every little league has a MANDATORY rules clinic before the season starts. They also have a MANDATORY volunteer and coaches meeting. We need to get a foot in those doors and approach them with the idea that we develop and train new umpires. We are an affordable source of training.**

**Q #7**

**If you were elected to this Board & you were voted  to become a Committee Chairman, which one best suits your strengths?**

**Pick one & briefly explain why.**

* **Evaluation Chairman**
* **Training Chairman**
* **Recruiting & Retention Chairman**

**A #7**

**Evaluation is where my interests lie right now. I am by no means ready to chair, but I do have a desire to evaluate. I know I value the feedback my peers have shared….it makes you a better umpire and when you are ready to accept the feedback, you are maturing. When that happens, you will take your game to the next level and walk out on a 13 year- old game and work just as hard as you would on a High School Varsity game, You will give an effort because you are doing a job you are getting paid for that job. More than that, you will bring a good effort because you care about the game and your ability. You won’t have to worry about if you are being evaluated. You will umpire.**