

# The next generation of

Story by Jane Muñoz  
Photos by Jose Muñoz

Being involved in softball for more than a decade and with almost a year as an umpire, it sounds like Megan Smith would be older than her actual age of eighteen. She started playing softball when she was a five-year-old and after graduating from high school got involved as an umpire through her friend's grandfather, Bob Yesenski, who taught her a lot about umpiring. In the Phoenix area, there's a group of three or four umpires that are age eighteen and under, another group around twenty to twenty-five, and the rest go up in age from there...

Smith has called games for ASA and Triple Crown Sports. She attended the ASA National Umpire School, a two-day session for Region 13, in February 2009. Smith also learned from her mentor, Warren Carle, through a mentor program; she said, "Being with somebody who's older than you, who knows the ropes and can do it well, to teach you, is a good way. Read the rule book, know what you're doing, have fun... 'Cause coaches will yell and you kind of gotta brush it off and be okay with it. It's a practicing thing, you don't just get it right off the bat. You have to keep working at it and you'll get better." She admits that it's not something you can go into and be perfect at, that it's really hard to do.

SWM: *So what do you like about being an umpire?* "I like knowing further into the rules, like why you would do this and that. But I really like yelling... Like the third strike-out or calling someone out on a close play at second. I like the yelling part of it."

SWM: *Do people ever get mad at you for making a wrong call?* "All the time, all the time. Mostly the players don't really speak up, it's more the coaches that get upset and yell at you. It's their job. Yeah, I've made my fair share of wrong



calls. I've never had a really bad conversation with a coach."

SWM: *Do you ever change a call?* "If I know I've made a complete mistake, then yes. But a lot of the calls they fight about are a judgment call, like a tag at second, and it would be my judgment. Nine out of ten it's not changed."

Smith knows the game, having been a utility player for years and spending the last four years pitching with some first and third base work. She's been offered a scholarship at a community college near Bakersfield, California where she'll be a pitcher and be able to continue to work with the catcher she's been with for the past four years.

Megan Smith, Umpire

SWM: *Are you going to make this (umpiring) a part of your career?* "I would like to umpire for a while. I know softball's always going to be part of me, so umpiring is a good way to keep in touch with softball."

Smith said, "If you think about umpiring, just go out and do it.

Find somebody that you can have show you the ropes.

It's fun. It's worth doing."

For all types of information about umpiring, check out [www.cactusumpires.com](http://www.cactusumpires.com), Cactus Umpires, a website run by Hall of Fame umpire Emily Alexander.