

# GSLAU 2022 Election Nominees Biography

## President (two-year term)

### Brett Bognar



**How long have you been umpiring?**

8 years

**How long have you been a GSLAU member?**

8 years

**What are some things you are proud of as a member of this association?**

Seeing the growth and opportunities of our membership.

**Why do you want to be on the board?**

I have been on the board since 2020. We have started to see significant improvements with our training programs and ways we can teach. I was instrumental in our association getting our Zoom account to continue trainings while we were not able to meet in person. I was also instrumental in bringing the Ump-App to our association with umpires I have crossed paths with that all have the same passion in wanting to share knowledge with all umpires that we have gained. We have a wealth of respectful and knowledgeable baseball and softball umpires in our area that we could do a better job of using them to help train our umpires. We are starting to see newer ideas for growing our association and leagues that we can't service. No matter what level each umpire desires to achieve we can help them get to that level. Our job should be promoting our umpires, being proud of them with their achievements, and creating a brotherhood that everyone wants to be a part of.

**Have you even been on a non-profit board before? (If so, tell us about it)**

Yes - GSLAU

**Do you feel the association is behind the times, with the times, ahead of the times, and why?**

We are starting to get with the times. There are still things that we can do to help attract younger umpires. Jim Browning has been in our website development and is a huge asset to our association. I was instrumental in bringing the Ump-App into our association which will help all our umpires to continually learn. There are features we will be implementing in the future to even further these aspects.

**What would you do to recruit more members?**

We need to start working with the youth associations in getting their attention of what we are about the different levels of opportunities we have with our association. We could start hosting free one-day clinics with these associations. We also need to start working with all of our local colleges with the baseball and softball programs as well as the intramurals programs to express our need of umpires in both baseball and softball

**Please use this section to write a short bio on yourself that isn't reflected in the questions.**

I was born and raised in St. Charles, MO. I have been married to my wife Lauren for 2 years and we have an 18-month-old son Brooks. I have a history of playing college baseball at the JUCO and DII levels as well as coaching at those levels early in my career. I got into umpiring because I saw a need for more officials. I typically attend 2 umpire camps a year. I use this information I learn to help further and better my game but also use it to share with our members in our trainings. I take great pride in how we are respected and seen when we are on the field. My goal is to help grow the interest in umpiring within our association and providing opportunities for all to grow. We need to start taking care of each other and bring our association back together where everyone feels a part of something special. I want nothing but success for all of our umpires. I want our umpires to achieve the best they can with their abilities as well as want to learn and help mentor umpires in our association.

## **Second Vice President (two-year term)**

### **John Jeffress**

**How long have you been umpiring?**

About 30 years.

**How long have you been a GSLAU member?**

About 25 years. This is my second stint with the association. I took off about ten years to coach my kids.

**What are some things you are proud of as a member of this association?**

The friendships I have made, being part of this association that has been around since 1939. Being part of an association that has seen and has so many great umpires. Great tradition with a bright future.

**Why do you want to be on the board?**

To continue to grow the association and continue to enhance its training capabilities.

**Have you ever been on a non-profit board before? (If so, tell us about it)**

We have established a non-profit in my son's honor to provide college scholarships to St. Louis area high school wrestlers, which we have provided two scholarships so far. Also, the goal is to provide funding to St. Louis area police K-9 units.

**If elected, what are some projects you would like to be a part of?**

To continue the softball training and to see the association become truly a baseball and softball organization.

**Do you feel the association is behind the times, with the times, ahead of the times, and why?**

Getting into the times. Tradition is a great and hard thing. But we are getting there.

## **What would you do to recruit more members?**

Continue to enhance the training, allowing it to be offered to a wider audience as a draw to our organization. Just like baseball itself, there are so many options. And we need to create an organization that stands out from the other umpiring opportunities.

## **Please use this section to write a short bio on yourself that isn't reflected in the questions.**

Started umping when I was 14 and joined the association when I was 18 after an off-season injury. I went to umpire school in 1985 and umpired in the Northwest League that summer. After returning to St. Louis, I was hired by the Creve Coeur Police Department which started my 22-year law enforcement and corporate security career. Not only am I a member of the GSLAU but I also umpire for NSA, USA and I umpire JUCO, D3 and D2 softball. My wife Natalie and I have been married for 32 years and have 3 Children, Andrew (Former member of the GSLAU), Blake and Lauren.

## **Recording Secretary (two-year term)**

### **Jeff Birk**

My name is Jeff Birk. I have had the honor of serving on your Board of Directors for over 10 years. I would like to continue as your Recording Secretary as I have done the past four years. My umpiring began in a youth Church league back in 1982, when I was twelve years old. In my second year of college, I felt ready to try high school baseball and registered with MSHSAA. After two high school seasons, I joined a friend and went to the International Umpires Camp in Atlanta. Soon, I discovered I have much more to learn. In 1992, I joined the GSLAU and realized that decision was right. I am proud to be a member of this wonderful organization. The great members we had and still have trained me to become a better umpire. About my sixth year, I worked my way up the GSLAU and was given the chance to work Junior College (JUCO) baseball, including Regional and Super-Regional Games. We continue to send many qualified umpires to work well at this level. At recent meetings, things have been said that imply our association is inferior. I disagree. With our roster decreasing, getting additional umpires to supplement our college schedules is sometimes needed. However, I do not feel we need outside help to replace our umpires to cover these games.

When I started, we were required to go to base and plate mechanics meetings each of our first three years. Our assignor and many of our college-level umpires, some who worked Division I college baseball, trained us well. Now MSHSAA is making that training mandatory. Furthermore, our Training Committee supplements our training with indoor pitching machine clinics, base umpire clinics, and rules clinics. We have a former MLB umpire and the Division II College Midwest Regional Umpire Coordinator to evaluate us and help us keep up with the times. As a high school and JUCO assigning organization, I feel we are superior to umpire groups throughout our region and beyond.

To help us grow, we need to get umpires of all ages, but especially younger candidates. Getting new umpires in a crucial problem throughout the country. Our Recruiting Committee is working hard by contacting those who inquire on our website. During the proper situations, I sometimes talk with a player and find out he or she umpires youth leagues. Many of our members work games from many different levels and with many other non-GSLAU members. These are great chances to encourage those who already umpire to move up and join us.

Throughout my past years on the Board of Directors, I have been asked to lead rule discussions at our Annual Meetings and softball meetings as well. Furthermore, I have helped at field clinics and have assisted our past assignors by evaluating at fall JUCO games. I look forward to gathering as a large group to learn the game and get clarification on new rules. More and more, I do not see the brotherhood as in the past. Many of us seem to be in a rush to finish the game and leave right away. As a younger umpire, I remember after summer games when we would share a drink or more in the parking lot and discuss the game. When multiple games were at the same place, larger groups would get together and go over unusual situations. During these times, I also learned a lot, and moreover, developed long-time friendships that have lasted well beyond umpiring.

## **Darcell Fleeman**

### **How long have you been umpiring?**

27 years

### **How long have you been a GSLAU member?**

Over 12 years

### **What are some things you are proud of as a member of this association?**

Overall, I am proud to be a part of a long-standing umpiring association that cares about its members.

### **Why do you want to be on the board?**

I am running for recording secretary after serving as a Director most recently. I feel that the history of our association should be documented correctly and accurately. I would like to make sure that those duties are carried out. I feel we need to provide such record to our membership on a regular basis. In addition, I feel that training is a very important part of our association. As a board member, I would be able to carry out the best possible training for our members.

### **Have you even been on a non-profit board before? (If so, tell us about it)**

Yes. I spent 6 years on the Fort Zumwalt Lacrosse Board while my sons were playing lacrosse. During my time on the board, I was instrumental in fundraising, scheduling trainers for each home game, maintaining our website, maintaining game schedules, communication to the team, coaches and parents. In addition, I wrote the by-laws and submitted all paperwork that were instrumental in making the lacrosse club a 501(c)3 nonprofit.

### **If elected, what are some projects you would like to be a part of?**

I am currently on the board, and I have started to develop the mentorship program. I would like to see that implemented and carried out in 2022 and beyond.

### **Do you feel the association is behind the times, with the times, ahead of the times, and why?**

I feel the association is behind the times. The association is an established association in the community however, the game and processes are always changing. As a member of the association, I don't feel that we have changed along with the game. If the association is going to last for another 75 years, we need to change with the game.



## What would you do to recruit more members?

Recruiting of officials is an important part of our membership. I feel it is important to start recruiting younger officials from the athletic associations in our area. I feel the GSLAU needs to do more recruiting within the athletic associations to get younger umpires excited about continuing to umpire. Let's face it, officiating is not an easy job. If we offer our training to the local athletic associations free of charge, we are then getting our name out to those younger officials who may or may not know who we are. The GSLAU has many years of experience to offer younger officials. We should give back to the officiating community.

## Please use this section to write a short bio on yourself that isn't reflected in the questions.

I have been an official for the last 27 years. I am also the State Umpire and Chief for the National Softball Association. I am responsible for scheduling, training and recruiting umpires across the state. I have also umpired many post season softball games over my career. As well as college assignments. My kids are also umpires, including my daughter, who was a GSLAU member until she left the state and went to college. I understand the importance of recruiting, training and supporting the future of officiating.

## Director (three-year term)

### Barry Bogнар

I been umpiring for six years and have been a member of GSLAU for six years. Previously I coached at all levels from T-ball to High school.

In those six years, I have been surrounded by some of the best umpires in the St. Louis and surrounding areas. The GSLAU is truly a brotherhood of men and women of all ages and walks of life. I have also attended several Umpire Camps.

I have been a member of the board for the past three years and would like to continue serving all members by helping instituting new changes to bring the association into the 21st century by utilizing the technology that is available today. With the age of the current members getting older (myself included) there will be holes to fill and that means recruiting newer and younger people to enter into this great advocation is a must.

If elected I would like to see the board propose the following topics:

1. Have meetings before each season with coaches both high school and summer leagues to discuss their concerns and problems if there are any. Explain some of the rules that they might not understand.
2. Contact local colleges that offer officiating classes to recruit and explain there is a great opportunity to stay involved in the great games of baseball and softball while making extra money. Once they finish their class they can start umpiring.
3. Promote a larger understanding that this is an Umpire Association not just men's baseball, but softball and not just males. Help recruit more females into the softball umpiring Brotherhood. I used the term Brotherhood because that is what our association is.
4. Form a mentorship program.



5. Possibly institute a community fund raising project where each member might contribute one game fee toward a worthy local cause chosen by the association. This will put our name out in the community so show that we are not just about umpiring the game.
6. Publish out minutes of each board meeting for all members, via the website.
7. We need to move ahead with today's technology by allowing voting using a the secure way of Google Workspace or whatever form that might be available. By using this method, it allows everyone the chance to make decisions (there are many for whatever reason that never attended the meeting but would like to be kept informed).
8. Promote individuals who show talent and help them advance up the umpiring ladder.
9. Have a weekly or biweekly chat sessions to discuss rules or plays that might have occurred in your past games.
10. Setup some means to help out new umpires maybe give them and new shirt and hat. Have list of used equipment that they might borrow for the season.
11. Look into the possibly of hanging a GSLAU banner at every park we serve to recruit new umpires.
12. Strive to have everyone's picture in Arbiter. This helps all members.
13. TRAINING, TRAINING ,TRAINING IN PERSON ON THE FIELD AND THROUGH ZOOM.

I feel the association is behind the times and needs to move forward with new technology and change the way we might have done thing in the past.

Embrace the challenges that we might confront and DO NOT SAY "WE HAVE NEVER DONE IT THIS WAY BEFORE" OR "WE HAVE ALWAYS DONE IT THIS WAY IN THE PAST".

While talking with fellow umpires, many seem to say they should be doing only Varsity games and not lower level games, each and every umpire should be willing to give back for the betterment of the Brotherhood that we call GSLAU. We all strive to be the best we can and every one of us want the best games but remember we have a shortage of umpires and officials across the nation.

Everyone should be willing to work all levels of play. Just because you have been a varsity game umpire only, if you are assigned a lower-level game embrace it and work it the same intensity you would give varsity level. Remember we all started at the bottom and it's all about giving back to the association to make it move forward. People will see "GSLAU" more than just umpires but we care about the games and we give back.

# Ben Perry

**How long have you been umpiring?**

9 years

**How long have you been a GSLAU member?**

8 years

**What are some things you are proud of as a member of this association?**

The training I have received, the friendships I have made with members in the organization, the ability to move up and ump varsity and JuCo games, and the culmination of being selected for MSHSAA baseball district games.



**Why do you want to be on the board?**

I want to help be a voice for every member of the organization, from new recruits to the veterans to the old guard and understand where each is coming from with GSLAU concerns and the future of the organization.

**Have you ever been on a non-profit board before? (If so, tell us about it)**

I was a board member for the St. Louis Men's Baseball League as the Umpire Liaison for the 2017 season. The goal was better communication between the men's league and the assignor when it came to any issues between teams and umpires and umpires for post-season games. I had the ability to see how each team ranked the umpires on: Knowledge, Positioning, Awareness, Fairness, Profesionalism, StrikeZone.

**If elected, what are some projects you would like to be a part of?**

If elected, I want to help with the recruitment committee and training aspects of the organization to help our numbers within the organization and officiating as a whole since numbers are dwindling for high school officials in Missouri. Getting new members and training them this essential with the increasing number of games that we officiate during the summer with tournaments and summer leagues that our organization is involved with. Help continue to have good relationships with the MCCAC college conference and perhaps getting back other summer leagues like the St. Louis Metro Collegiate league and perhaps club baseball for colleges around the St. Louis area that have club baseball teams.

**Do you feel the association is behind the times, with the times, ahead of the times, and why?**

I feel that our organization has a good amount of being with the times in this digital age with training but also having old-fashioned training sessions that are a reliable way to teach new umpires and keep veterans sharp, no amount of online training could ever replace knowing what to do when you're behind the plate or in the field in a scrimmage or practice. Our organization has done a fantastic job with new training endeavors over the last year and I hope to be a part of the decision process on the board for whatever next step we want to take.

**What would you do to recruit more members?**

I would like GSLAU to work with MSHSAA and local high schools to discuss with AD's and varsity coaches about getting some of their players into officiating if they believe their baseball playing days are over, both MSHSAA and ADs know we are getting stretched thin in areas and occasionally having one umpire for lower level games. We should strive as an organization to always have two umpires at every high school sporting event the GSLAU officiates, both baseball and softball.

**Please use this section to write a short bio on yourself that isn't reflected in the questions.**

I have been a MSHSAA certified baseball umpire for 8 years and an NCAA certified umpire the last 3 years, working NJCAA, D3, and NAIA baseball. I also continue to ump youth leagues at Affton AA and Arnold AA when I can as one of their veteran umpires. I also help assist with the umpire training that Arnold AA does for their new umpires, using the knowledge i have learned from GSLAU training sessions and college umpire camps to help teach young umpires how to officiate correctly and deal with all the gray areas and situations that come with umpiring a game.