



## 2020 Season Report

### Directors Report - Donna Gregory & Stephen Lord

Where to start? What a year. Our first year as Directors of the London League, and we were hit with an unprecedented pandemic.

We started really strongly with the rebranding of Greater London Softball Mixed League to London Softball League (Or LSL for short), and developing and launching the new website. Special thanks must go to Elliott Josypenko for his tireless work and enthusiasm for the project, Ross Smart for our fantastic logo and branding, Jess Horton for the legwork on the new website, and special thanks to Mark Gould, Kathryn Klasnich, Ali Brown & Matt Waller for additional input on the website. Thanks also to Simon Gordon for hosting and maintaining the GLSML website for so long.

We also had a mandate to establish a rules committee to settle a few matters raised at last year's AGM (automatic ball walks for women, how to settle tiebreaker situation more satisfactorily, and tweaks to the language of the gender-inclusive rules Kat Macann so ably championed, as well as trying to incorporate the League into a Community Interest Company (Or CIC) so we can take better advantage of grants for league development. Work is still ongoing, however, we really do need the members of the league to help out with this one especially if you have legal experience.

We opened registrations, and were excited to have 53 teams sign up, with the inclusion of Battitude, the new Dev Squad team. We also held, after moving a few times due to rain delay, a very successful New Players' Day in Regents Park, where we saw what we felt was a record turnout of new players. Very special thanks goes to Petra for arranging this and thanks to the 101 team for helping run the drills.

However as the season approached, Covid-19 loomed ever larger, and before we could commit to fixtures, the nation was put in lockdown, followed by restrictive tiers. The committee gamely met every month to discuss what the league could offer within the endlessly shifting sands of social distancing regulations.

We found new ways to engage with the community during lockdown with a virtual 101 program. Whitney Hollis, Ryan Turtill, and the rest of the LSL Development Team made a valiant effort to get a structured online 101 program with weekly sessions held entirely by zoom at first, then in small groups

in parks around town. It also saw the introduction of LSL's YouTube channel, where 101 introduced training videos you could do at home. Whitney was rewarded for her brilliant pivot with the British Baseball and Softball Coaching Awards' Softball Adult Coach of the Year—well done, Whitney!

When it became clear that we couldn't hold a full or even a half season, we held our first electronic EGM to ask the league to cancel the season officially. While it was a formality, we had to ask the league in an official capacity to cancel the season as the constitution does not allow the committee to make this decision on behalf of the league, even when gathering and playing softball was not legally permitted. 38 teams voted out of 53, with 37 teams voting to cancel, 1 team abstaining and 15 no responses. A simple majority was needed to pass.

In July, government guidance meant that we could start to gather in groups of up to 30 for sport. BSUK managed to get our sport's return to play officially sanctioned by the government, and by August we were finally able to book a pitch in Regent's Park and run 2 very popular sessions each Saturday until the November lockdown hit us again. Liz Knight was absolutely brilliant in this – we had close to 60 people attend each week for 10 weeks, and no covid outbreaks.

We had initially planned to offer sessions in the South (John Archer Way) and the North (Black Horse Road), however due to a whole spectrum of issues, councils being on furlough, pitches not taking booking and booking sites not answering emails, it wasn't possible to extend this outside of central London, sadly.

However it was nice to see the community getting together for their own games and we thank everyone for following the Return to Play guidelines issued by BSUK.

2021 is likely to be another strange year, and only time will tell whether we'll be able to offer a competitive season as an option, but the signs are good for us to be able to get back on a diamond in some manner in the next few months with the vaccine being rolled out. However, as we do not know what will be allowed we will be following up this AGM with an EGM in March once we know more. There we will look to present options on what kind of season we can have and what the league would be comfortable doing. However we do not feel that it is helpful to be speculating on the details of this at this moment in time. We would ask teams to please stay in constant contact with the league as to your teams situation, we do not know if any teams have folded due to losing players going back home for example. The more we know upfront the easier it will be for the committee to organize something once we know more.

We want to thank the outgoing officers – Vijay Chauhan, Steve Karmeinsky, Stephen Vallance, Petra Keferova and Joe Deeley for all the hard work and support they put in over the last few years.

And lastly we want to thank all of you for being understanding and patient with us in what was a very challenging year for everyone. Let's hope 2021 is a better year, with much more softball!

## **Development Report - Whitney Hollis**

Due to Covid-19 we were unable to conduct our normal Softball 101 sessions in the 2020 season but learned to innovate. At New Players' day, we saw a large amount of interest in playing softball in London with players of various skills. We decided that we wanted to continue to engage with those new to softball and invite them to learn about softball. We developed 'Virtual Softball 101' session in which innovated ways for people to play in their own home and develop their skills—from hand eye coordination to developing that homerun swing. These were held every Monday evening from May until July with an average attendance of six people. As restrictions lessened in July and August, we held seven in-person sessions in both Wandsworth on Mondays and in Finsbury on Tuesdays. The Wandsworth session had up to 5 people every week with Finsbury had on average 10 people (split across two groups of 6). When we had the ability to play with up to 30 people, we held two games- one in Finsbury against Battitude and one for minors players. At the end of the 'season', the new players transitioned to join our minors sessions at Regents Park on Saturdays.

I must thank Liam Morrison, Ryan Turtill, Lukas Kelly, and Claire Read for all their hard work to contribute to the programme for 2020. I am proud of how we were able to pivot our programme during Covid and will know how to operate in a future crisis and still bring softball joy to everyone. We created some good assets that could be useful for us in the future and learned how we can better engage with the softball community. But at the end of the day, we cannot wait to hit the field in 2021 and support the further development of future softball players.

## **Comms Report - Elliot Josypenko**

2020 was a big year for the LSL in terms of Communications. We invested a big part of our time and energy into a new website and design, at [www.londonsoftball.co.uk](http://www.londonsoftball.co.uk) and improving some of the communication structures and protocols involved in the league. There is certainly still work to do, and if you have any ideas, or even more importantly, some expertise to help us realise those ideas, please do get in touch. 2021 will involve improving the synergy between our social media approaches and hopefully actually using our website in some of the ways we envisaged!

## **Umpiring Report - Liz Knight**

League rules require all teams must have at least two qualified umpires. We planned and had very good sign ups for 4 bronze, 3 silver and 1 gold course in April and May. Due to covid these did not run and will be rescheduled to a more suitable time. BASU are currently in the process of recording videos and making some content available online. In May BASU offered some online Q&A conference calls over the summer , with mixed attendance rates.

For info the LSL courses available were;

### Gold / BASU courses

This is a 2 day course which is the gold tier of LSL umpiring programme. You can become a certified BASU official by passing a two-day qualification course led by a BASU Trainer and then successfully completing an assessment game monitored by one of these Trainer/Assessors, usually at a tournament.

### Silver LSL one-day courses

The Silver course is a one day Umpiring course that is aimed at Umpires with some experience. There will be a focus on game management with time for practical drills. Participants will be qualified to umpire both plate and base in the LSL.

#### Bronze LSL half-day courses

The Bronze umpiring course is 3 hours and aimed at players who are new to umpiring. The focus will be umpiring in the field and there will be plenty of time for practical drills.

The participants will be qualified to umpire in the field.