



LSL RULES FOR GENDER INCLUSION

Introduction

The BaseballSoftballUK LGBT Advisory Panel published a set of **Inclusive Softball Rules**¹ for co-ed slowpitch softball in the hope that league and tournament organisers will adopt them and thereby make softball in Britain even more inclusive.

In the latest published version, rules and language from the standard Softball Rulebook produced by the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Softball Division have been revised to make members of the LGBT community feel even more welcome within our sport. The Panel recognises that these rules will continue to evolve with time and welcomes any feedback from players and organisers.

Background

The London Softball League (LSL) rules are based on full WBSC Softball Division rules with league specific variations set out in the LSL Standing Orders & Regulations. For the 2019 season, the LSL committee decided to trial the introduction of rules, based on the BSUK guidance, to support the participation of non-binary players. At the end of the season, the committee took into account any feedback presented to the LSL team captains at the 2019 AGM. It was agreed and voted to fully incorporate the Gender Inclusion rules into the Standing Orders & Regulations at the 2019 AGM.

The variations set out below are included in 2020 LSL Standing Orders & Regulations. They will apply in any game involving players who identify as non-binary, to clarify how the principles of gender balance will be applied in that context.

Key principles

- Retain the principles of gender balance and alternating genders in batting line-ups and on the field
- Enable non-binary players to slot into a team in place of either a male or female player
- Enable NB players to self-select which size ball to hit

VARIATIONS

1. Definitions and player numbers

- We recognise that people defining as gender non-binary are defined as neither male nor female.
- We recognise that trans* players can identify anywhere along the gender spectrum.
- For the purposes of these variations, we are defining genders as female (F), male (M) and non-binary (NB).

As a variation to WBSC rules, LSL regulations permit teams to play with one or two players missing. These are variations to LSL Regulations Section 8(a):

¹ <http://www.baseballsoftballuk.com/lgbt>



Number of players	Gender balance
8	No more than 4 players of the same gender (2 x automatic outs for the missing players)
9	No more than 5 players of the same gender (automatic out for the missing player)
10	No more than 5 players of the same gender
12	Not more than 6 players of the same gender in total; not more than 5 players of the same gender on the field at any time Extra hitters must be different genders

2. Confirmation of line-ups

At the plate conference prior to all games, in addition to discussing any ground rules and highlighting any use of non-rostered players, captains will exchange line-ups, which will specify players' gender and which size ball they will be hitting (including substitutes). This will allow the umpires to apply the rules on ball size, walks, batting line-up and fielding positions appropriately.

To help with smooth communication, captains may choose to notify the opposition and umpires in advance.

3. Batting order

- In the starting line-up, no two players of the same gender can bat consecutively (regardless of whether they are hitting 12" or 11" balls)
- Extra hitters must be of two different genders

Examples of valid and invalid starting line-ups:

- A = 1 x NB player
- B = 2 x NB players

Batting order	A1 Valid	A2 NOT Valid		B1 Valid	B2 NOT Valid	B3 NOT Valid
1	M1	M1		M	M	M
2	F1	F1		F	F	F
3	M2	M2		NB	M	M
4	F2	F2		M	F	F
5	NB1	NB1		F	NB	NB
6	F3	M3		M	NB	F
7	M3	F3		F	M	M
8	F4	M4		NB	F	NB
9	M4	F4		M	M	F
10	F5	M5		F	F	M
11	M5	F5		M	M	F
12	F6	M6		F	F	M



4. Fielding positions

- The defensive outfield must consist of a **maximum** of two players from any one gender
- The defensive infield must consist of a **maximum** of two players from any one gender
- The pitcher and catcher must be of a different gender.

Examples:

Outfield: LF – Male, LC – Female, RC – Non-Binary, RF – Non-binary.

Infield: 3B – Non-binary, SS – Female, 2B – Male, 1B – Female.

Pitcher/Catcher: P – Male, C – Non-binary

5. Substitutions

- Non-binary players may be substituted by or for another player of the same or a different gender, providing that the rules for overall player numbers and fielding restrictions are maintained
- The introduction of a substitute of different gender to the player they are replacing may result in consecutive genders in the line-up. This is permitted.
- The team making a substitution must notify the opposition captain and/or scorer and confirm which size ball the substitute player will hit.

6. Balls

- As per LSL regulations Section 3, male players must hit 12” balls and female players have the option to choose to hit either 11” or 12” balls.
- Non-Binary players have the option to choose whether to hit 11” or 12” balls. This choice will be confirmed on the line-up shared at the plate conference prior to the game and the player’s choice will remain in effect for the duration of the game.
- The batting side is responsible for ensuring the umpire and fielders are aware of which ball each batter is using.

7. Walks

- **Any player** hitting the 12” ball will receive two bases on a walk. *This includes female batters and is a therefore variation on the current LSL rules.*
- Players hitting an 11” ball will receive one base on a walk.
- When there are two outs, if **any player** hitting a 12” ball is walked, the following batter (regardless of gender or which ball they are hitting) can opt to walk to first base without batting.

Guidance for umpires and captains



In the event of any dispute or disagreement regarding the application of these rules (or any others), umpires or captains should contact the Technical Officer – technical@londonsoftball.co.uk and follow the established process for technical protests and disputes.

The LSL Code of Conduct sets out our values and the standards of behaviour we expect from everyone involved in the game. This includes accepting people's self-identified gender for all purposes.

All communication between the umpire and team captains should be respectful. Umpires and captains should avoid stigmatising or singling out non-binary players, and should not question players' gender selection.

Any breaches of the Code of Conduct or concerns regarding player/umpire behaviour should be reported to the committee as soon as possible – email director@londonsoftball.co.uk.