



2021 Season Report

Directors' Report - Donna Gregory & Stephen Lord

In 2021 we saw the return to softball after a year off while the world was in lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic. While the UK was still locked down at the start of 2021 by around Feb, we saw a small window of opportunity to provide some sort of softball. It was still unclear on when or, indeed, if we would come out of lockdown, making any kind of planning incredibly hard to do.

As a committee, we started by gauging the views of you, the teams, and seeing whether you would be interested in a season and what kind of season you would be interested in. We weren't sure of the teams' situations, as a lot of people had either moved out of London on a temporary or permanent basis and what this may have done to squads.

We were encouraged to see if there was an appetite for softball in 2021, but it became clear that a lot of teams were going to struggle for players. In the survey we sent out, there was not a clear favorite option, however it was clear that some form of competition was wanted without the promotion and relegation due to the player situation.

With this in mind, we felt we had a mandate to move forward and plan. We sent out registration to the teams asking you whether you would want to enter as your team, or in the case of shortages, merge with another team to make up numbers. Once we knew how many teams wanted to enter and we knew timings from the government, we calculated how much softball we could fit in. We knew it would be a later start and looked at a feasible way to cram in as much softball as possible. From this, the Graded Divisions were born. While we tried to keep teams and divisions as local as possible, it simply wasn't possible to do in its entirety; also we discovered that many teams had players that would have to travel regardless.

A large part of the planning was ensuring we had fields to play on- not an easy task with many councils and groundskeepers now working from home and not easily contactable. As we progressed down this route, we discovered many grounds would be available for the 2021 season. We had lost Battersea Ironsides, Clissold and we did not have all the pitches at Regent's Park available to us. This meant having to relocate many teams to new grounds and facilitating games on irregular days to ensure a full schedule of softball.

We successfully managed to cram teams into Wandsworth (both JAW and Bellevue), Colliers Wood, Regents & Blackhorse Road. After about 12 versions of a fixture list, we finally had a season to progress.

The season ran from 24th May to 5th August and we split the divisions to our tournament gradings of Red (Majors 1&2), White (Majors 2 & 3), Gold (Minors 1 & 2) and Blue (Minors 3). Because we had to make the divisions as even as possible for fixtures to work, and because some teams were missing, we felt we had to mix things up and to make them as fair and safe as possible and thus we landed on the structure we did. Based on the feedback we got, the vast majority were very happy with this.

During the season, we had a few disruptions based on weather, but no games were called off due to Covid. We also did not receive any reports of any outbreaks at games. The only real disruption we had was around the middle of the season when we had received notice, from Wandsworth Council, that the Bellevue pitch bookings were canceled with immediate effect. We did not receive any warning, which made an already challenging year even more challenging.

Thankfully we had taken into account that the circus was due to appear at Wandsworth Common and we had already adjusted fixtures around that, meaning we had a couple of weeks to find new homes for 6 teams. With an already congested field situation, with no free spaces available to us, we were able to achieve rehoming the teams affected by extending the season for them by 2 weeks. We are still discussing with Wandsworth about a second pitch however right now it is not looking likely. Alternate venues are needed.

With that said, we managed to complete the season with winners of each grade and division. They were:

Red A: Mescalitos

Red B: M16 & Meteors Black

White A: Soft Boiled

White B: Oddsox

Gold A: Base Jumpers, Raiders Red & Buccaneers.

Gold B: Mafia

Blue: Meteors Mash & Battitude.

Special mention for Battitude, in their first season winning their first divisional title.

Summer Ball:

In 2021 we held our first tournament since the pandemic began. I think it goes without saying it was a big success. All the praise for that goes to Ross Smart, Ali Brown and Donna Gregory for organizing. Also want to thank all the volunteers who helped out on the day. Normally we would hold two tournaments throughout the year however First Ball falls in May, and we hadn't come out of lockdown by that point meaning we could not have two tournaments. So we put our efforts into hosting a bigger tournament. We had 32 teams enter. We created some new grades however these broadly represented the tradition Red, White, Gold and Blue.

Dingers:

Cup Winners: Mescalitos

Plate Winners: Mobninos

Gophers:

Cup Winners: Oddsox

Plate Winners: Swinging Chargers

Slammers:

Cup Winners: Meteors Mash

Plate Winners: Bat to the Future

Taters:

Cup Winners: Diamond Dogs

Plate Winners: Beavers

The feedback was good, thank you all for making it a great day.

Outgoing roles:

As with every volunteer organization we rely heavily on our volunteers and we have some committee members who are stepping down this year and we wanted to thank them for all their hard work. I know we could not have achieved anything without them.

- Donna Gregory (Co-Director), Chris Vogt (Treasurer) , Ellito Josypenko (Communications) & Liz Knight (Umpiring)

I want to thank all these guys for putting years of service on this committee. They have all gone above and beyond the call of duty with making London Softball what it is and they have been invaluable. They will be greatly missed.

We can not keep the league going without the tireless effort from our volunteers. As such we do implore teams to speak to their teams to ask their players to come forward if they would like to volunteer. Even if it's not a role on the committee, we always need volunteers for ongoing work.

Development Report - Whitney Hollis

As 2021 was a unique season, I was unsure if we would get enough people to participate in our development sessions, but due to our amazing SEO and advertising across platforms we had more people than I have ever had to coach. Our first few sessions, we started out with over 50 people but then on average had around 25-30 people a session until the end. We had quite a rainy season which meant that we only had 10 sessions in total (one in a pub!).

This year, we focused on continuity and establishing a clear and easy process for the development sessions. We utilised a new app called Orfi that we could advertise our sessions and also process payments as well as utilised iZettle (donated by Paypal) contactless payment card reader which has helped us to collect and track payments. Further to streamlining this process, we have several different coaching plans that we can now use and adapt as needed and also can utilise our virtual tools on rainouts.

We entered two teams into Last ball: Decorative Bunting and Batting from Home with one of the teams in the cup. They were dropped into it since we had Last Ball earlier than normal, but they did well with minimal injuries and are now indoctrinated into the London Softball League. I look forward to seeing them join the league whether as a team or as players.

We also had the ability to bring back the Girl's game where we support the development of ladies in our minors' leagues with coaching and games. This was led by Claire Read and Liz Knight who coached 16 women from across leagues and teams. We hope to run more of these sessions in 2022. Lastly, I must thank all those you came to coach and volunteer. As you may or may not know, we started a programme where if you volunteer and support with plans for more than half the season coaching, you can receive your Coaching Level 1 certification and be paid £20 a session in the next season. If anyone would be interested in this programme, please reach out directly. Again, we could not succeed without the time and energy from our coaches Liam Morrison, Lukas Kelly, Liz Knight and our volunteers, John Rushworth, Alistair, and the continued support from the LSL Committee.

I am proud of this programme and how its grown. I look forward to seeing its continued success in the coming years and welcoming new adult players.

New Players - Daniel Brightman

There was no New Players Day in 2021 due to Covid measures. Instead there was more focus on sharing new player details with team captains looking for players. The sheet could only be opened and viewed (no editing) by people specified on the document sharing.

The list contained people from the 2020 season

As of 25 July 2021 there were 161 names on the list, 98 men, 63 women - currently the list has 276 names on it.

- 44 teams registered an interest in recruiting players - 24 men and 54 women
- 20 New players found a team - 7 men, 13 women, across 12 teams
- 15 signed up to 101 Sessions

Tricky getting exact numbers as players and captains were not so forthcoming about updating me when they had found a team/player.

Umpiring Report - Liz Knight

BASU have launched their new online training system and have made this available for LSL. The new umpiring officer will need to coordinate dates with BASU for the online training and then the in person practical element.

This will take a huge amount of admin work away from the Umpiring officer and reduce the demand on local trainers time.

For info the current LSL courses available are :

- 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 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 only.