



2022 Season Report

Directors' Report - Stephen Lord

2022 saw the full return of softball to the league.

Work began on the new season in late December 2021 and we had our virtual AGM in early February 2023.

Registration for the 2022 season opened on the 24th of February 2022 and closed on the 27th of March 2022. We saw 47 teams sign up, which was down from 51 in 2019, pre-pandemic. However, we saw 4 teams merge into 2 teams and we had 3 teams drop out. We did have the addition of the new Dev team Swamp Monsters.

With some teams folding and others merging, it presented the league with an opportunity to reset the divisions that had 9 teams back to 8 teams. Essentially 9 teams in a division made the season too long. Most teams struggled to complete their seasons with a lot of games being cut short due to light due to how late they were being played.

In March we saw the return of New Player's Day. Daniel's report goes into more detail but overall it was a very successful event. Again we saw a bigger influx of 12" ball hitters while 11" ball hitters were again very much in demand. We saw a lot of teams having to recruit due to players leaving or not playing as much due to the pandemic.

The season kicked off on the 25th of April over 14 weeks. For the most part, the season went well, with minimal disruption. However, we did see an increase in rescheduled games due to more transportation strikes and extreme weather, compared to previous seasons. Even with the new division format, some teams still struggled to get all their games in before the regulated end of the season. This was also not helped by the lack of field space caused by some grounds not being available to teams anymore.

In 2022 we saw most teams lose access to Finsbury Park (apart from Knights). This added to the issues already caused by losing Battersea Ironsides and Wandsworth Common (Bellevue) back in 2021. Despite numerous calls, emails and meetings with those venues between the league and teams, these fields look to remain unavailable for the foreseeable future. The committee put the call out to captains and players

to help find new fields in 2022. Despite this and the committee lobbying councils and grounds, no new fields were found in the South to help alleviate the demand and pressure caused by losing those two fields. With around 12 teams playing at Battersea and Wandsworth Common, we saw John Archer Way and Colliers Wood have every night booked up this season. This led to postponed games having to be played much later than usual or at Last Ball in some cases. We were however fortunate to have Clissold Park back after a few years of not being available. This helped take the strain off the loss of Finsbury. Other than the fields mentioned we had access to all the remaining pitches we had in 2021, apart from 1 which only affected one team and did not have too much of a knock-on effect. As always, the committee is asking the teams and players to help find new fields. Specifically in the South where there is a shortage of suitable fields to meet the demand. The committee has put a lot of effort and genuinely tried their best to find new fields but with no success. It wasn't all doom, however. Claire Read of Bat to the Future arranged Bacon's College in Canada Water. This is a new venue with storage, changing rooms and within zone 2. And while I understand this field was not always in the best shape it did help alleviate some of the pressure from teams in the South. We hope to return there again this year with more teams and hopefully better field conditions. I would ask teams to please speak to Claire directly if anyone is interested in moving.

Other than fields, the other major challenge we faced last year was access to umpiring courses. Before the pandemic, BASU ran in-person courses for the league (Gold- BASU, Silver-Plate & Bronze-Field). However, since Covid, BASU focused their energies on running a new online course. This course was a BASU course which saw trainee umpires complete the course over an 8-week period. However, with the focus solely on the BASU qualification, it meant there was nothing on offer for people who wanted to do our standard silver course which focused on plate umpiring just for LSL. Due to the timing of the AGM, not having an umpiring officer in place and mixed communication between the league and BASU, it resulted in the league missing out on the BASU course and as such offering no umpiring courses. It is definitely something we have learned from. As such the committee has already set up 2 BASU courses for this year, which started last week on the 24th Jan. The league will still pursue a 1-day course substitute but the BASU course is the only option for Umpire Training currently. If we have any BASU umpires who are willing to help the league develop this with us we would really appreciate your help, please can you reach out? Even if you are not signed up for the BASU course, the coursework is on the website which will allow players to train themselves at the bare minimum.

Finally, ending on the season. We had some very tight finishes. We had 2 playoff games for 2nd place. The winners and runners-up of each division are as listed.

Div 1 - Winners: Secret Agents MI:6 - Runners Up: Mescalitos

Div 2 - Winners: Mouse Rat - Runners Up: The Dazzlers

Div 3 - Winners: Cheetahs - Runners Up: Raiders Gold

Div 4 - Winners: Base Invaders & The Mafia

Div 5 - Winners: Meteors red - Runners Up: Pimlico Parrots

Div 6 - Winners: Diamond Dogs - Runners Up: High Voltage

Outgoing roles:

Laura Carreto - Umpiring Officer. Laura joined the committee straight from the Dev squad. While the league struggled to get the umpiring course going, Laura still persevered in trying to lobby BASU for the 1-day course. Laura was always on hand helping the committee with events such as the tournaments, the All-star game and the end of season party.

Ali Brown - Comms Officer. Ali joined the Committee in 2020 and has been an amazing asset. Implementing new ways to communicate through Instagram, mail chimp (With the league losing access to BSF Spawtz). He has also been instrumental in keeping the website up to date. He will be sorely missed but he is thanked for his service to the committee.

Stephen Lord - It is a bit weird writing about yourself but it has been my absolute privilege to serve on the committee for the last 3 years. When I joined I did not envisage everything shutting down just as we were about to plan a season. Needless to say, it was a challenging time for everyone. I found myself very much in a caretaker role, filling in the gaps of vacant roles. As a result, I got to know to understand many different aspects of the league very well. Sadly, due to time constraints and my capacity stretched due to vacant roles, not all the work I set out to do was completed, such as CIC. While I regret this, I have enjoyed every minute of being Director. I have met and worked with some amazing people and am truly grateful for the opportunity.

Tournaments - Lorraine Phee

First Ball:

On June 11th we held our first tournament after Covid restrictions had been lifted, and it was a great success. We had 32 teams participate across 10 fields at Regents Park. We want to thank all of those who organised the tournament and those who volunteered to set up in the morning. We were very fortunate to have 9 full-time umpires for the day and greatly appreciated all those who stepped up to fill in relief games.

The after-party was hosted by the Greene Man Pub near Great Portland Street station. Despite not having a megaphone, the awards presentation took place in front of a rather loud and rowdy crowd of softballers. In regular softball fashion, the pub was spilling out into the streets

The tournament was split into our usual 4 grades Red, White, Gold and Blue. The results are below:

Blue Grade

Plate Winners: Knight Sliders

Cup Winners: Battitude

Gold Grade

Plate Winners: Buccaneers

Cup Winners: Knights

White Grade

Plate Winners: Bat Intentions

Cup Winners: Game of Throws

Red Grade

Plate Winners: Coyotes

Cup Winners: Mescalitos

Last Ball:

On August 6th 2023, we held our second tournament of the year at a new venue. Kings House School Sports Ground hosted 28 teams on a very hot summer's day. The tournament was divided into 3 grades this time, each with its uniqueness.

Blue grade consisted of 10 teams split into 2 groups of 5 who played each other in a round-robin. The top 2 teams in each group played for the cup and 3rd and 4th place teams in each group played for the plate. Both 5th-place teams played each other in a placing game.

Gold grade consisted of 8 teams split into 2 groups, which followed the same group format as we saw at First Ball. The division is split into 2 groups of 4. Teams in each group played each other in a round-robin, and then the 2 teams in each group played for the cup. The bottom 2 teams in each group played for the plate. Losers of each of the semi-finals played each other in a placing game giving each team at least 5 games each.

Red grade saw a very different format than what we were used to. This was due to an odd and large number of teams in this division entering the tournament. The decision to format red grade this way was for the safety of the lower division players. We had a guest team from the Bankers league which meant we had to promote a team from Div 3 into red grade which happened to be Game of Throws. The final format of the grade was after consulting the captains on how this should be run.

The after-party and awards ceremony was hosted on-site. This time we had a megaphone for the presentation but in softball, fashion managed to drink the bar completely dry by 8 pm. The good news is the venue has promised that they will be fully stocked and prepared for us in the future! Overall it was a great day full of softball, unexpected results, sunshine, dried-up grass and MI6 playing their music way too loud.

Last Ball 2022 results were as follows:

Blue Grade

Plate: Pimlico Parrots

Cup: Battitude

Gold Grade

Plate: Oblivion

Cup: Bat to the Future

Red Grade

Shield: Game of Throws

Plate: Mescalitos

Cup: Secret Agents- MI6

Development Report - Whitney Hollis

With the growth in 2021, we had to update the way we could run the sessions and manage new players. We had to better streamline and digitize our fee and registration process as well as have more clear and more detailed coaching plans to ensure we were aligned. We held 13 out of 15 sessions with the main cancellations happening because of transportation strikes or weather. The growth of softball is great to see but it is putting strain on 101 and will need more support in the future. We grew again from an average of 22 people a session to 31 people a session with many sessions above 40. It is great to see this demand for softball and will need to think about how can continue to grow and deliver development.

Digitising 101

To help with capturing players and fee collection we implemented the app Spond. Players can register with the app, sign in for each session and pay. The administrative aspect helped to track numbers, communicate announcements, and organise payments. There were some initial teething issues and need to encourage people to use the app more. We do still collect payments via iZettle, but I hope we can lean on that less and utilise the app efficiently.

101 Teams & players

We entered two teams, Base Jam & Wet Sox, into Last Ball and had one team enter the Raiders Tournament in Slough. This was a great opportunity for the teams to see live action. In the past, we would usually see a lot of male players but we are excited to see more females and non-binary players this year and in some sessions outnumbered the male players. We are excited to see what they will do next season as there is a lot of potentials.

Female and non-binary sessions only

A staple of continual development for this group, these specific sessions delivered by Claire Reed aim to further develop the players and empower them. We were oversubscribed which shows how popular this continues to be and could use more volunteers to help deliver this in the future.

What happens after 101...

We need your help and ideas. For the last two development years, we have been fortunate to have at least one or two experienced players help coach the teams after Softball 101, but not all are so lucky. These players play in the summer and then during the off-season need a refresh. We are working to provide a few sessions for them before the season starts to expand our strategy and operations, but it would be nice if we could find a way to buddy them with more experienced players to continue their development. Do you have any thoughts on how we can manage that? How involved should we be in continuing development?

Coaching & Volunteers

WE NEED YOU! The development sessions have been an essential staple for the growth and development of players for the London Softball League. It has grown and evolved with lean resources. We have taken strides to develop coaching plans that were tested and will need to be tweaked for next year, but at least lays a foundation for anyone to follow. We had a new coaching trainee, Chris Carr, who helped coach all season and will receive his coaching 101 accreditation. It is great to see growth in

coaching but would like to see more or to have more volunteers going forward. With average numbers of around 30, we had to re-deliver programmes in a circuit approach to ensure players were kept engaged and continued to develop. This helped, but again we only had three coaches and sometimes were down to two. We are grateful to some of the volunteers that did come out a few times, they were: John Rushworth (Diamond Dogs), Andrew Vergara (Mouse Rat) and Daniel Levitt (The Mob).

If there is anyone who would like to come out and volunteer or desires to become a coach, please do reach out to development@londonsoftball.co.uk . All volunteers and coaches are compensated. We will have two coaches for the 2023 season but will need more support than ever with these growing numbers.

2023 is Whitney's last year

It has been a pleasure to be part of the committee and see how much softball and our players have grown. It is always such a fulfilling experience and has enjoyed building out the programme. I am taking a step back from the committee and the 101 programme in 2024. If anyone is interested in taking over, please reach out and come out to shadow/volunteer for the sessions. I will continue to support the programme but in a much smaller capacity in the 2024 season.

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

New Players report - Daniel Brightman

This season saw the return of New Players day. There were plenty of keen players looking to get involved. 85 Players signed up for the day, 33 females and 50 males. With that many, the two groups were made, dependent on experience, and put through some drills. The day was finished with good attendance at the Big Penny Social where teams could talk to potential recruits. Thanks to everyone that made this day possible.

The league had spots for 59 females and 36 males across 36 teams.

20 players found places on 13 different teams. Hard to get exact numbers of players recruited due to a lack of feedback.

Going forward for 2023, we are planning to revise the new player sign-up form to improve the quality of submissions and course put together another new players day.

Comments and suggestions to newplayers@londonsoftball.co.uk