

BaseballSoftballUK LGBT Advisory Panel

Inclusive Softball Rules Guidance

The BaseballSoftballUK LGBT Advisory Panel has been working on a set of **Inclusive Softball Rules** 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 this new version, some 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.

We recognise that these rules will continue to evolve with time and we welcome any feedback from players and organisers.

Full WBSC Softball Division rules will apply with the following adaptations:

Gender identification, line-ups and fielding positions

At the beginning of a tournament and/or game, captains should provide information to the home plate umpire about their line-up. This does not need to be done in a formal manner, but will allow the umpires to apply the rules on softball size, walks, batting line-up and fielding positions appropriately. Conversation between the umpire and team captains should be respected and advice given to teams so there is no stigma from the opposition.

- 1- We recognise that people defining as gender non-binary are defined as neither male nor female.
- 2- We recognise that trans* players can identify anywhere along the gender spectrum.
- 3- For the purposes of these variations, we are defining genders as female, male and non-binary.
- 4- The batting order: no two players of the same gender next to each other (see the two scenarios below):

Odd number of NB players:	Even number of NB players:
1- M	1- M
2- F	2- F
3- NB	3- NB
4- F	4- M
5- M	5- F
6- F	6- NB
7- M	7- M
8- F	8- F
9- M	9- M
10- F	10- F

- 5- The defensive outfield must consist of a maximum of two players from any one gender.
- 6- The defensive infield must consist of a maximum of two players from any one gender.
- 7- Pitcher and catcher must be of a different gender. For example:
Outfield: LF – Male, CL – Female, CR – Non-Binary, RF – Non-Binary.
Infield: 3B – Non-Binary, SS – Female, 2B – Male, 1B – Female.
Pitcher/Catcher: P – Male, C – Non-Binary.
- 8- Extra hitters must be of two different genders and must follow all rules above.

Balls

- Male players should hit 12” balls.
- Female players have the option to choose 11” or 12” balls before the game/tournament starts.
- Non-Binary players have the option to choose 11” or 12” balls before the game/tournament starts.

Walks

- Any player hitting the 12” ball = two-base walk.
- Any player hitting the 11” ball = one-base walk.
- When there are two outs, if a 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.

General advice, anticipated objections and responses

- 1- At every level league or tournament play, players can choose to play as their identified gender (i.e., the gender they identify as in their daily life).
- 2- Umpires are not to question or challenge players’ gender selection.

Objection: Cisgender men will pretend to be trans / NB to take advantage of gendered rules.

Response: Do we really think this is likely to happen? It would require the team captain and the team themselves to be complicit, and to suggest this is offensive.

Objection: MTF (Male to Female) transformation, AMAB (Assigned Male at Birth) non-binary people will have an unfair advantage.

Response: The benefits of promoting inclusion of a significantly marginalised and under-represented community will far outweigh the risks of perceived unfairness. It seems unlikely that this would be a widespread issue based on current levels of participation – in fact, it would be a great problem to have, but we’re a long way from that!