

OSA League Rules for co-ed play: 2025 Season

Executive Committee, 17/04/2025 – issue 2

INTRODUCTION

All World Baseball Softball Confederation rules will be followed for the entire duration of the season, with the exceptions, modifications or clarifications detailed below. Where applicable, the reference numbers refer to the relevant section in the WBSC rules. “Ox” rules are Oxford specific and not found in the WBSC rulebook.

Ox1 GENDER RULES

The OSA incorporates the “Inclusive Softball Rules Guidance” from May 2023, which can be found in the captain’s pack. Rules for batting line-up, fielding position, etc can be found in this document. While the sport is becoming more inclusive, several legacy documents including the WBSC rules still use the male/female classifications extensively. Therefore all players must play as either of those “genders” for practicality reasons. In simple terms, these are defined as:

Players identifying as “male” hit a 12” ball and are also referred to as big ball hitters (BBH)

Players identifying as “female” hit an 11” ball and are also referred to as small ball hitters (SBH)

Players identifying as any other gender choose whether to hit a 12” or an 11” ball. All rules of softball that refer to male or female gender shall be understood to refer to 12” (BBH) or 11” (SBH) ball hitters, respectively.

Players must specify which ball they will hit (and therefore their “gender”) before each game. If a complaint is made about a specific player taking advantage of inclusivity rules, the Executive Committee may require the player to specify a “gender” for the remainder of the season.

Ox2 THE LEAGUE

League structure and schedule, promotion and relegation

Ox2.1 Structure, scheduling and umpiring

The league structure depends on the number of teams taking part in the current season. The Executive Committee will determine the league structure, game schedule and umpiring responsibilities prior to the start of the season and will circulate relevant information to team captains in a timely fashion.

If the league is large enough to require multiple divisions, separate rules may apply for intra-division and inter-division games. Teams will be classified by their division at the beginning of the season, Division 1 (Div1), Division 2 (Div2), etc.

The league structure may dictate that teams are separated into divisions during the season rather than at the beginning. If this is the case, teams will be classified by the division they *finished* the previous year for the start of the season. If the league is then split into divisions, each team will be classified to their new division.

Example: A team finishes the previous season in Div2. They start the subsequent season as a “Div2” team. If they however score enough points to be placed in Div1 after the league is split into divisions, they are classified as a “Div1” team from that point forwards.

If the league consists of two or more divisions from the start of the season, then the team finishing the previous season bottom of division 1 will be relegated, and the team finishing top of division 2 will be promoted.

Ox2.2 New and reconstituted teams

New teams joining the league will start in the lower division. However, where there are extenuating circumstances, teams may apply to the Executive Committee for an exemption to this rule.

A team does not qualify as a “new team” by simply changing their name. In the event that existing teams disband to form new teams, and claim the place of the disbanded team, the Executive Committee will determine how to accommodate such instances. The Executive Committee will be guided by the team affiliations of players the previous year, and may conclude that a new team can assume the league place of a disbanded team if the majority of its players were rostered to the disbanded team the previous year.

Ox3 League game points and final standings

Ox3.1 Points for Games

For league tables or league pools, 3 points will be awarded for a win, 1 for a loss, and 0 for a forfeit.

A **forfeited** game is where a team is unable to field a legal team (as defined in the OSA League rules). This is scored as a forfeit (0 points), with a scoreline of 7-0. It is possible that both teams forfeit, in which case both score 0 points, and the scoreline is 0-0.

Ox3.2 End of season league standings

The final league standings will be decided on the following criteria:

- The team with the most points. If tied, then
- The team with the greater head to head points scored (i.e. wins). If still tied, then
- The team with the fewest forfeits. If still tied, then
- The team with the greater head to head run difference. If still tied, then
- The team with the fewest head to head runs conceded. If still tied, then
- Toss a coin.

Ox4 Officially sanctioned scratch team(s)

With the permission of the Executive Committee, the league may support a scratch team in the lower division. This means that no roster will be required, although regular players may need to register for insurance purposes.

Any spare player from any team or club may play for the scratch team as many times as he or she wishes. Scheduled games involving the scratch team will automatically be scored as a 7-0 (3 point) win to the opposition, providing a game has taken place. A win will not be awarded to teams that forfeit games against the scratch team for reasons of not having the required number of players. Note that the scratch team is a development opportunity and it is incumbent on league teams to play some kind of game even if there are very few scratch team players available.

Personal statistics are not to be collected for individuals playing for or against the 'scratch team'.

The heading numbers below refer to the number of corresponding WBSC rule and are therefore not necessarily continuous.

1 THE GAME

1.1 Start time

The Executive Committee will publish start times for games during the season to maximise the daylight available for evening games.

Unless by prior agreement between captains and umpire, league games will begin at, or before the advertised start time with a minimum of 8 legal players on each team. A grace period of 10 minutes may be applied, if agreed by the umpire, after which the game is forfeited, and it is recommended that a friendly be played instead.

A delayed start, due to poor weather, may be agreed by the umpire.

1.1.4 Offensive/defensive choice

The home team (as defined by the fixtures list) by default bats second, but has the option to bat first if they choose to.

1.2 Games stopped before completion

1.2.1 Deciding to stop play

A captain may ask the umpire to consider a request to stop play (or resume play) at any time.

The decision to stop play before completion of a game may be taken because it is considered that conditions have become too dangerous to continue play. This decision will be made by any of the following three criteria: a decision by a neutral umpire, by mutual consent of the two captains, or a decision by two or more Executive Committee members. Recommencing a game on the same evening will also be decided by the same groups.

If a game is stopped due to poor light, dangerous conditions, lightning or accident on the field which prevents the game from continuing on that pitch, then the game will be considered a regulation (completed) game if the conditions below have been met. If the conditions for a regulation game have not been met, the game will be restarted to an agreed date and be replayed from the start of the game. The original lineup may be changed when the game is replayed.

Clarification: According to WBSC rule 1 section 2, a game can be considered to be regulation (completed) if the team second at bat is leading in the bottom of the fifth inning or if five innings have been completed. Where a game has to be abandoned within the sixth or seventh innings, the score will be rolled back to the last complete inning, unless the team second at bat is ahead in runs.

Example: Team A bats first and is ahead in runs after 5 complete innings. If the game is called in the top of the 6th, then Team A wins. However, if Team B takes the lead in the bottom of the 6th inning and the game is called, Team B wins.

Lightning

At the first sign of lightning, the umpire shall stop the game and all players must take shelter inside a building if available. The Executive Committee will then liaise with umpires about restarting games but typically if, after 15 minutes, there is no further lightning, then the game can resume. If lightning is still present after a 30 minute period, then the game will be stopped and the above rules regarding a stopped game will apply.

1.2.3 Runs ahead (mercy) rules

Two runs ahead rules will be in place for all OSL games.

The standard WBSC runs ahead rule applies. The game is stopped, and a winner declared if a team is ahead by 20 runs after 4 innings, 15 runs after 5 innings. Complete innings are played unless the home team scores the required number of runs while at bat.

In addition, during the first 6 innings, the offensive team will conclude their innings when the play which scores the 7th run of the innings is concluded.

Example: Having scored 6 runs in a single innings, the batting side scores two runs on their next at bat. After the play concludes, the innings is finished (irrespective of the number of outs), the batting team having scored 8 runs.

1.2.4 Tiebreaker

WBSC rules regarding tied games will be enforced - additional innings are played until one side has scored more runs than the other at the end of a complete inning, or until the team second at bat has scored more runs in their half of the inning before the third out is made. In the 8th and subsequent half inning, the batter scheduled to bat 10th or 12th (usually who batted last in the previous inning) begins the inning on 2nd base.

A tied game that is stopped for light, rain, lightning etc. will be restarted until a winning team is determined. For games which have re-started but which must be stopped on tied runs after 5 or more complete innings, 2 points will be awarded to both teams.

1.2.11 Protests and disagreements during games

The exact nature of the protest must be made clear to the umpire and opposing captain at the time, and where possible a neutral Executive Committee member.

If the issue cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, the game is then played under protest. The nature of the protest must be noted in writing by the umpire and communicated to a member of the Executive Committee verbally on the same evening, and in writing within 5 days if requested by the Executive Committee.

1.2.14 Result of protest

Results of Protests and any arising decisions or penalties will be determined by a Protest Sub-Committee (PSC) appointed by the OSA Executive Committee. Members of the PSC should not have any conflict of interest regarding the teams in question. The Executive Committee should take the recommendations of the PSC, but may appoint another PSC to repeat the process if the Executive Committee feel that existing WBSC guidelines and other OSA procedures have not been taken fully into account.

2. PLAYING FIELD AND EQUIPMENT

2.2 The Playing field

2.2.3 Local field rules

Clarification: Where line markings are present, they are to be enforced. If lines are not marked, the umpire must make decisions based on his/her judgement.

Umpires will discuss any local field rules with captains prior to games commencing. The Executive Committee may choose to issue local field rules at the start of the season.

Playing field set-up

The home team is responsible for setting up the playing area with bases and any other equipment as provided by the OSA. There should be a full kit bag with equipment and separate astro-turf mat for each pitch. The home team is also responsible for returning the astro-turf mat and the kit bag with the full set of equipment, after play has concluded.

Each kit bag should include:

- Pitching plate
- Home plate
- First (Safety) base
- 2x bases (2nd/3rd base)
- 2x batting helmets
- Catcher's mask
- Set of pegs for astro-turf mats
- Flip score boards
- Copy of OSL rules
- Guides for players/captains/umpires
- League Code of Conduct

2.4 Players' equipment

2.3.1 Bats

Clarification: Bats must all comply with the latest BSF/BASU guidelines. The approved bat list (or banned bat list) must be checked and enforced.

2.4.2 Shoes

No metal or metal tipped studs/cleats/spikes are allowed. In addition, the umpire, at their discretion, may ban footwear on safety grounds.

2.4.3 Protective equipment

Catchers are strongly encouraged to wear proprietary face masks at the time of the pitch.

The use of batting helmets and mouthguards are encouraged for all.

Under 18 players (U18) require additional safety equipment to participate. Refer to the 2024 BSF requirements in the captain's pack for full details. Teams must make their equipment available for inspection by an OSA official when requested to do so before a game. This will only be done to ensure that protective equipment of a suitable standard is being provided for games.

2.5 Uniforms

Matching shirts are to be encouraged, but are not required. Offensive players may not take advantage of similar coloured shirts to the defensive team to cause confusion during play. Umpires will make decisions and rulings on any such occurrences. No other uniform rules are to be enforced other than those relating to safety, which are at the discretion of the umpire.

3. PARTICIPANTS

3.2 Line-up and rosters

3.2.1 Line-up cards

Teams are required to provide line-up cards to the opposition at the beginning of each game. A picture taken of the scorebook with all starting players and positions, as well as any available substitutes is acceptable. Any borrowed and/or non-rostered players must be marked in the scorebook. Teams are also required to present their line-up card/score book during a game when requested by the opposition, umpire or OSA official.

Team Rosters

Teams will be permitted to have a roster with a maximum of 24 players at any one time. Players must only be rostered to 1 Oxford League team at any time. Players can be added or removed at any time, with the following exceptions:

- No non-rookie player can be added during the final 5 weeks of the league season
- Any player which has been removed from a roster cannot be re-added to the same roster during the same season

All players must be rostered and registered with the league and BSF at least 24 hours before the start of any official league game. Rookies are allowed to participate in a maximum of 2 games before being required to be rostered and registered.

Any player being rostered to a team does not exclude them from being able to participate with a different team for any tournaments, non-official league games, training sessions, etc.

Teams may request an exception to any of the above rules via the Executive Committee. Any requests must be made with ample time for a decision to be made, and no request shall be denied unnecessarily.

As per WBSC rules, a team may file a protest if an ineligible player participated in the game. Protests should be made following the standard protest procedure within 48 hrs of the completion of the game. If the protest concludes an ineligible player did participate, the game will be forfeited in favour of the non-offending team.

Rookies

Rookies are defined as players new to softball (fast-pitch and slow-pitch), baseball, and any other similar sport. Cricket/rounders/etc are *not* considered similar enough.

Examples of players who would *not* be considered rookies:

- Player who plays in another league
- Player who played fast-pitch softball/baseball in an organised league previously

- Player who played more than 5 games of an organised season previously
- Player who plays in tournaments, but not an organised league

If any team is unsure about the classification of a player, please ask!

3.2.2-4 Players

The "EP" (extra player) is an option included in League play (that allows a 12 person batting line-up) and is detailed in the WBSC rules.

Teams are permitted to play with fewer than 10 players, to a minimum of 8. They may choose where these "holes" appear in their field and batting line-up (although they must still comply with gender rules).

An automatic out will be enforced for every person missing from the batting line-up of 10 to a maximum of 2. If the league has designated an official 'scratch team', automatic outs are not applicable in games involving this team.

Teams may field a non-playing catcher of any gender (who does not appear in the batting line-up). The batting team will field a non-playing catcher if requested to do so by a fielding team that has less than 10 players able to take the field.

Illegal re-entry of a player will result in the ejection of the player only (and not both player and coach/captain).

3.2.5 Injury during the game

If, due to injury or illness during a game, a player is no longer able to participate, they may be replaced by any member of the team not currently in the batting line-up (irrespective of whether that player has already appeared in a different position in the line-up).

Teams that cannot field a full line-up due to injury during a game, are also eligible to borrow from other teams if players are available.

Clarification: OSA respects replacement of players for any injury incurred during the game. This is not merely restricted to bleeding injuries.

Under 18s: welfare

Prior to the game, captains must have written permission from the parents of under 18s to field them in the in-field. The league's Welfare Officer (with responsibilities for safeguarding) must see the written permission before the first game, involving the U18 player, begins.

Borrowing players

Teams may only borrow players if they have fewer than 5 BBHs and/or 5 SBHs players available from their own roster for the game, or if they do not have a pitcher available for the game.

Clarification: If you arrange to borrow a player and find, unexpectedly, you can field a team of 10 on the night, you may **not** play the borrowed player.

Teams may borrow a maximum of two players. These players must be rostered to another OSL team. All borrowed players should always hit in the last possible positions of the batting order.

A borrowed player can only play in the following fielding positions: pitcher, catcher, CR or RF position. A borrowed player may only play in CR if another borrowed player is playing in RF. However, all teams must comply with the rule that requires fielding an equal number of BBHs and SBHs in the in-field and outfield respectively.

A team which does not have a recognised pitcher is allowed to borrow a third player who can play as a pitcher only. The borrowed player is replaced by a designated hitter when at bat. If a team does not have the minimum of 10 players excluding the pitcher, they will take an auto-out.

Any team classified as Div2 should borrow from another Div2 team. Any Div1 player who is borrowed by a Div2 team, cannot bat and the borrowing team will take an auto-out.

3.4 Coaches

Team coaches are generally referred to as "captains" and "vice-captains".

- An offensive base coach stationed near third base must not wear a catching glove.
- The offensive base coach stationed near first base must wear a catching glove for the purpose of providing the pitcher with the correct ball. However, they must not "present" their glove during the course of play (which would be judged as interference).

3.6 Umpires

Teams will be required to supply umpires for select games during the season. These umpiring assignments will be added on the schedule.

Clarification: All players are reminded that the interpretation or enforcing of rules may be questioned by only the captain or vice-captain of either team. Judgement calls by the umpire (e.g. ball/strikes, force outs etc. etc.) may not be questioned.

3.7 Scorers

3.7.1 Official scorer

There is no official scorer, and both teams shall keep scorebooks. Teams should endeavour to check that their scorebooks tally at the end of each half innings. Disagreements should be immediately resolved by the captains with input from the umpire as required.

Ox5 PROCEDURES FOR RAIN OFFS

Procedures for stopping play during the game are included elsewhere, this section deals with procedures for terminating play prior to the game starting time.

Weather monitors

The OSA shall appoint a weather monitor, and a deputy weather monitor.

Based on forecast information, and possibly taking into account the views of the team captains, the weather monitor will decide if play is to be cancelled. All players should assume that play is to proceed unless they hear otherwise. Captains will be notified by 4:30pm on the day of the game if the game is being cancelled or postponed.

"Rain-out" slots will be included in the League schedule, and teams are expected to play games in these. Alternative dates may be agreed if no rain-out slots are available. If a suitable time proves impossible in an acceptable time frame, the game may be designated a 5-5 tie by mutual consent of the captains. Any rescheduled games will follow the rules outlined above for incomplete games.

Ox6 TEAM COMMITMENTS

Ox6.1 Team Equipment

All teams playing should have a kit bag which must contain the following:

- First Aid kit
- Game balls
- Additional helmets recommended

All kit bags are subject to be checked by umpires, opposing captains and OSA officials.

Ox6.2 Recording Statistics

Each team in the League must provide correct statistics as indicated in these rules. The penalty for not complying with this is that statistics may not be included in determining end of season awards for teams and individuals.

The following stats are the minimum required to be included in the relevant awards:

- PA (the amount of times a player goes to bat)
- Hits and bases reached (the amount of times the batter hit the ball and reached base safely without causing an out)
- Walks (bases on balls)
- HR (the amount of times a batter makes it all the way around the bases to home plate in one play)
- FC (fielder's choice – when a batter hits the ball into fair territory, but gets one of their team mates out on a forced play. This is regardless of whether the batter makes it to base without being out themselves)
- BBH and SBH best fielders for each game from each team. Where a team fails to provide this for the opposing team, a captain is eligible to assign the awards to players from their own team.

Errors: For the purpose of batting statistics, errors in the form of overthrows only should be taken into account.

Borrowed: Statistics for borrowed players will not count towards end of season awards.

Inter-Divisional Games: All regular season games will contribute to statistics for the end of season awards.

At the end of the match:

- Best Fielders: Each team is required to nominate a best male and female fielder from the opposing team. If they fail to do so, the captain may appoint these nominations to their own players. Note that the award is for "Best Fielder" and is not intended to be a MVP/player of the match/sympathy vote
- Teams must upload a photo/copy of their scoresheet within 2 weeks of the game to:
stats@oxfordsoftball.uk

Teams will be required to upload their statistics to the OSA website. Details and deadlines will be provided to team captains.

Ox6.3 Return of trophies

The winning team must return its trophy by the last competitive game of the season (not including rainouts). If a team fails to return the trophy, then any decisions/penalties will be determined by the full OSA Committee.

Ox7 Safety

Ox7.1 Head Injuries

The BSF strongly recommends that all players who sustain head injuries, no matter how trivial they might seem, are taken to Accident and Emergency for examination. During a game, a player who receives a direct hit to the head or whiplash from a collision, dive etc. should have a head injury assessment (HIA). A medical professional is advantageous, but where such a person is not present at the game, a coach or team-mate should assess the injured person (for lucidity, balance, vision etc.) before allowing them to continue in the game. Players themselves are not eligible to determine whether they are fit to continue.

All head injuries and any other serious injuries should be reported using the **Incident Report Form** to be found in the captains' pack or downloaded from the BSUK web site (see below).

Ox7.2 First aid kits

As specified in Team Equipment, all team kit bags must contain a first aid kit. This must include as a minimum plasters/dressings/bandages to manage bleeding, and spray/ice packs to manage bruising.

Ox7.3 Accident reporting

All accident/near misses should be reported using the incident report form. The form is available in the captains' pack and may be downloaded from:

<http://www.baseballsoftballuk.com/insurance/incidents>

(or the online form at that web address may be used to register the incident).