

BSF requirements for Under-18s playing adult softball

After several months of consultation and refinement, the BSF Executive has now published minimum requirements that must be met in order for young people aged under 18 to play, coach or umpire in adult softball teams, whether slowpitch or fastpitch.

A vote at the BSF AGM in February 2013 made these requirements mandatory rather than voluntary guidelines.

Below is the text of the BSF requirements.

Introduction

Everyone who participates in softball is entitled to do so in a fun, enjoyable and safe environment. These principles apply to all participants, but young people in particular are entitled to a higher duty of care.

The requirements below should be read in conjunction with the BSUK Child Protection and Welfare policies and procedures, which are in place to protect young participants and promote good practice (see: <http://www.baseballsoftballuk.com/welfare>).

To encourage the continuing development of best practice, the British Softball Federation has produced requirements for slowpitch and fastpitch leagues and clubs when considering whether young people under 18 years of age are competent to play in an adult team or to coach or officiate in an adult game. While no minimum age is given in this guidance, the younger the player, the more rigorous the assessment of competence needs to be.

These requirements are minimum standards to be followed by all BSF-affiliated teams, whether competing in local leagues, in tournaments or internationally. Teams, leagues and tournaments can introduce additional requirements governing the participation of young players on adult teams as they see fit.

Requirements

- Each team shall appoint a Welfare Officer who will ensure that the appropriate welfare procedures and checks are followed and that there is a process in place to assess whether the young player is competent to play, umpire or coach at the level at which the team is competing.
- Each player who is under 18 shall be assessed for this purpose by the Team Coach. If the team does not have a nominated coach, the Team Captain shall undertake the assessment. Where the coach or umpire is under 18, an authorised club member or BASU member shall make the assessment.
- Four areas shall be considered when deciding if a young player is competent to take part in an adult team or game:
 - i. General physical capability.
 - ii. Social development.
 - iii. Emotional development.
 - iv. Softball skills and ability.

A brief record of the player's name, date of the assessment, competency for all or specified positions and any observations or comments shall be made in the Team Coach's notebook.

- The young person's parent or guardian shall complete a Permission to Play form in all cases where the young person is competing with an adult team or taking part in an adult game. A sample form can be found on the BSUK website at: <http://www.baseballsoftballuk.com/document/parent-guardian-permission-form>. If a parent / guardian is unfamiliar with softball, a club representative shall explain the risks of the sport to them. The completed form shall be retained by the Team Captain.
- The Team Captain must ensure the young person is included on the team roster and is therefore covered by BSF Civil and Public Liability insurance, and by Personal Accident and Injury insurance if taken out by the team.
- The team shall arrange regular training and coaching sessions which young players should attend in order to progress their softball development and skills.
- Young players shall wear a helmet when batting and baserunning in slowpitch as well as in fastpitch softball. Also, in accordance with ISF rules, all players under 18 who are coaching, umpiring or acting as batboys or batgirls shall wear a helmet when on the field.
- Young players shall wear a gum shield if playing in the infield in either fastpitch or slowpitch.
- Young players must wear a catcher's mask if playing that position in slowpitch and fastpitch softball.
- Young players shall wear appropriate sports footwear.
- The Team Coach or Captain shall review a young player's competence to continue playing should game conditions change – for example, due to adverse weather, a change in the level of play or the conduct or aggressiveness of the opposing team.
- If an Umpire is unsure about the competence of a young player, he or she shall make his concerns known to the Team Captain.

Advice and compliance

If a team requires assistance in assessing players 18 and under, it should first seek advice from its local league. Should further support be required, please contact the BSUK Welfare Officer Jenny Fromer on: jenny.fromer@bsuk.com.

Each team is responsible for ensuring it complies with these requirements. If a team is not following the requirements, the team's club and then league should resolve the issues with the team's captain and coach.

If this is not possible, then the matter should be referred to the BSF Executive through BSF Administrator Vicky Hall on: vicky.hall@britishsoftball.org