



Softball Ireland Gender Inclusion Policy

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Below is a list of terms and abbreviations used throughout this document:

Term	Description	Abbreviation
National Governing Body	Refers to ‘Softball Ireland’	NGB
Regions	Refers to the regional associations on the island of Ireland (SL / SU / SCM)	-
Board	Refers to the Softball Ireland Board	-
Softball Ireland	The NGB of softball on the island of Ireland	SI
Softball Leinster	The regional association for Leinster	SL
Softball Ulster	The regional association for Ulster	SU
Fastpitch Ireland	The body responsible for the administration of Fastpitch Softball in Ireland	FPI
Softball Connacht Munster	The regional association for Connacht and Munster	SCM
Under 18	Refers to all players under the age of 18 years	U18
General Data Protection Regulations		GDPR

Introduction

Softball Ireland is committed to making softball an inclusive sport, for all. From time to time this may require some adaptations to the WBSC rules, Softball Ireland Regulations, or the regional byelaws, which ordinarily govern the sport. The utmost care is taken not to alter the level playing field in providing opportunity and observing people's rights. We would encourage organisers, officials, and players to adopt the following alterations regarding gender identification, where necessary. We ask that no member creates an uncomfortable or unwelcoming environment by questioning any player regarding their gender identity. Softball should continue to be played in the spirit of sport, and be safe and fun for all.

The current rules allow for the genders of male and female. These adaptations will define gender as male (M), female (F) and non-binary (NB). This is defined with the understanding that non-binary players identify neither as male or female and transgender players may identify anywhere along this spectrum. Players who identify as a gender, in their daily lives, will participate under the rules for that gender. A player is required to confirm their gender at registration and may not change over the course of a season.

Softball Ireland respects the gender identity of players. It is the policy of Softball Ireland that a player shall not be asked to confirm their gender once it has been noted on the roster. Where a non-binary player is identified in the line-up this should be communicated during the pre-game meeting to facilitate the following adaptations.

Rules to be adapted (Slowpitch)

1. Batting Order

Players must alternate M/F until this is no longer possible: (SI adaptation 6+4/5+5)

Adaptation: Batting order will continue as usual alternating ball size. A non-binary player will select a ball size at the start of the game and should bat in a line up position for that ball size.

*SL Byelaws state "In Divisions 1 and 2, SL League teams can play 5&5 or 6&4" thus the rule applies as above, alternating ball size until one size runs out

2. Fielding Positions

Defensive Outfield must consist of a maximum of 2 players from any one gender and the defensive infield must consist of a maximum of 4 players from any one gender, depending on whether the lineup is 6+4 or 5+5 and observing rules for pitcher and catcher.

Adaptation: Non Binary is to be added as a gender with the rule acting as normal thereafter.

3. Batting

Male batters will be pitched the 12" ball and female batters the 11" ball.

Adaptation: Non-binary players will choose prior to the game/tournament which ball they would prefer to hit. This choice will be confirmed on the line-up shared at the plate conference prior to the game and the player's choice will remain in effect for the duration of the game. The player's choice should be reflected in their position in the line up*

Extra player rule: If two EP's are used, all twelve must bat and any ten may play defense.

Adaptation: The two Extra players must be of a different gender. Batters must alternate gender until this is no longer possible

*SU Bylaws state "... the following balls will be pitched: i. 12" 52/300 ball (all male batters and any female batter who elects to hit the 12" ball instead of the 11" ball). This means that there are instances where the 12" ball may be pitched consecutively. However, the non-binary player's position in the line-up should follow a starting position based on an assumption of Male batters hitting a 12" ball and female batters hitting an 11" ball.

4. Walks

Batter must advance to 1st base when 4 balls are called by the umpire. In current byelaws, any walk to a male batter, intentional or otherwise, will result in a two-base award unless they are proceeded by a male batter

Adaptation: Bases awarded to NB players will be determined on the basis of which ball size they have chosen to hit and the ball size hit by the next batter up, with the rule acting as normal thereafter

If there are two outs and a male batter is walked a proceeding female batter will bat, except if there are two out, the female batter has the option to walk or bat.

Adaptation: If there are two outs and a player hitting a 12" ball is walked the next batter can choose to walk to first base if they are hitting an 11" ball.

5. Substitutions

Any substitute must be of the same gender as the substituted player.

Adaptation: Non binary players may be substituted by, or for, another player hitting the same size ball.

Additional Information

Softball Ireland understands that some players may have some concerns around these adaptations, and we are happy to facilitate any further information needed. This should not allow any player to act in a way which infringes on the dignity of a fellow player or official. There have been concerns relating to cisgender men pertaining to be transgender, transgender women having an unfair advantage or the potential for a non-binary player to have an advantage; our response is to outline that the abuse of inclusion measures in this way would not be accepted by the softball community, and we are confident in our members character that they would not be so flippant with issues facing members of our community. The perceived advantage that may be gained is minor in relation to creating an opportunity to practice inclusion in our sport.

Regions should follow the approach taken in these guidelines for any byelaw not mentioned.

This is a living document and may change over time, and with further collaboration and advice.

WBSC Rules - [5e85a934-d622-2bd8-62f9-854264607589.pdf \(wbsc.org\)](#)

SI Regulations - <http://www.softball.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Softball-Ireland-Regulations-01.01.2018.pdf>

SL Bye Laws - http://www.softballleinster.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/SLByelaws_2019.pdf

SU Bye Laws - <https://softballulster.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-SU-Bylaws-and-League-Rules-v1.docx.pdf>