

BASES LOADED



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Inside this issue

Birthdays	2
Two-out Tim	2
Farewell to four teams	3
New balls	3
Firstball	4
Tournaments	6
Next week's games	7
Results and standings	8

Welcome to our 26th season

WELCOME everyone to the 2017 MSL season. The off-season has been more trying than in previous years. We have unfortunately had a net loss of teams entering the league. It is the first time in a long time I can recall that being the case. While it is al-

ways disappointing to lose teams, we are very pleased to welcome three new teams to the league. I therefore especially hope that the Blue Jays, Meteors and Vipers have a successful and enjoyable time. As always I shall be available for any questions or comments you

have, although I do like a little time to spend with my team on a Wednesday night first!!!

Finally, good luck to everyone in what is looking like a very competitive league across all four divisions.

Dave Dean
(League head)

This week's games

Including streaks, pitches and umpires

Division 1

MAV 3L @ DOD 3W (4, MD)
MKT 2W @ GRX 1W (5, IC)
THU 1L @ LIG 1L (3, AG/JF)
LIO 4W rest

Division 2

CM2 1W @ SHA 1W (2, HS)
MUT 18L @ CAM 1L (9, CE)
MHM 4W @ MV2 1W (6, TLF)
SPE 2L rest

Division 3

BAT 4W @ PIR 3T (6, DD/AR)
DRZ 9W @ RIP 2W (8, JF)
OUT 1T @ TIG 2W (7, MG)
STO 4L rest

Division 4

BLJ - @ FRZ 3L (1, PF)
COL 2W @ TTN 7L (6, TLF)
HAC 1L @ REB 2L (2, PN/BA)
HUR 1L @ ENF 2L (3, ML)
PHX 2L @ BFL 2L (6, SS)
VIP - @ MET - (4, DW)

Teams play without fear as new league structure means almost no relegation

AT their pre-season meeting in March, captains voted to restore as quickly as possible the 8-teams per division status of a few years ago by stipulating that almost no team will be relegated at the end of this season. Only the bottom team in Division 1 will face the drop, while in Division 2, two teams will be promoted, the remaining five guaran-

teed a Division 2 place in 2018. Similarly, in Division 3, two teams will move up, the remainder staying where they are, to be joined by three teams from Division 4. The lowest division will start with a single rotation of twelve teams after which the bottom half will

form MSL's first ever 5th division. Of the remaining six Division 4 teams, half will be promoted to Division 3 at the end of the season.

May the 4th be with you



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Birthdays

Monday Angela Johnston (Colts)

Thursday Amilcar Gomez

(Thunder), Ian Mills (Hackers), Peter Rushton (Hackers), Catherine Whitehead (Barflies)

Friday Laricia Bragg (Camels),

Jonny Huck (Lions), Emily Kenyon (Enforcers)

Saturday Sapna Bhudia

(Enforcers), Charlie Gardiner (Camels II)

On this day ...

3rd May 2000: at that time this was the earliest date a season had started. Only five teams survive from that opening day 17 years ago: Mavs, Dodgers, Sox, Hackers and Bats.

By this date in 2011 it was week 3, with the Greensox and Mavericks facing off. A big loss must have again looked on the cards as Greensox opened with 12 runs, but the Mavs rallied to come within 2 runs in an eventual 16-14 loss. After only three weeks, Sox were the only unbeaten team in all three divisions. Lions sat in second place, having beaten Thunder 17-13. In Division 2 Storm and Blue Gnus had a 52-run slugfest, Storm winning 34-18. In Division 3, Meerkats, in their first full season, completed a mercy-rule defeat of Camels II with bat-arounds in both 5th and 6th innings. Tigers topped the table on runs conceded, with six of the 11 teams on a 2-1 record.

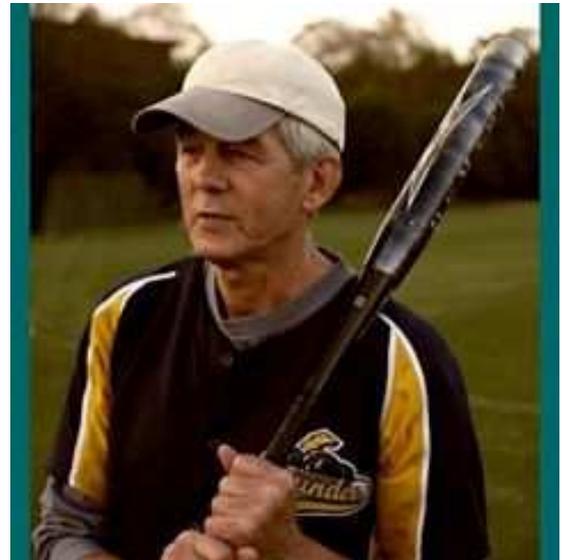
Bases Loaded, in its first season under its new name, started an 'A to Z of softball' series with A for average (specifically batting average) and B for Baseball (10 reasons why softball is better).

Two-out Tim—my part in his downfall

ALL things must pass, as George Harrison once sang, and with his departure for sunny Spain, the league is losing an elder statesman in Tim Roberts, latterly of Club Thunder, but originally of TSBees. Tim is an elder both in having been around almost since the beginning, but also, for the last dozen years or so, the league's oldest (regular) registered player. As well as playing, most often as pitcher, for 22 years, Tim has also been a regular contributor of match reports and other witty articles to these pages.

I asked Tim what was his first ever game. He replied: "I'm not certain but I think it was 1995 TSBees @ Hackers—and, with base runners going in several directions, we were subjected to a triple play. You might even have played in that game." I not only played in that game, but was one of the three fielders (playing at short-stop) who executed that triple, as was reported in the first ever issue of the *Review* the following week. Hence the title of this piece, as suggested by Tim.

Tim reports that his favourite MSL moment "was in the bottom of the 9th during the final Stingers game of the season in the late 90s. A comebacker to the pitcher (Tim Roberts, dad), throw to 2nd (Dan Roberts, son) throw to 1st (Jen Roberts, sister)." A walk-off all-in-the-family double play.



As already mentioned, Tim was a prolific contributor to these pages, if not the originator of then certainly a keen perpetrator of the much-loved use of synonyms for team names, as in his first ever match report, "Fauna face-off" describing the Bees v Bats game in June 1995. While occasionally heated (for example an exchange with editor Lisa Mayhew about teams taking it all too seriously) Tim's contributions have generally been humorous and intellectual, my personal favourites being the TV listings in the 2009 End-of-Season special issue, or the reports from his recent trip to Australia. Perhaps I'll re-run some of them when I have space to fill. And perhaps we can also hope that he will fill some of his copious hours of retirement researching and reporting on softball in Spain (it's called, rather unimaginatively, *softbol*). Anyway, that is until, post-Brexit, he and all the other former EU citizens get sent home. Tim, you will be most welcome back! *HS*

A fond farewell to four teams

IT is with much regret that we report the passing of four MSL teams since last season. With three new teams joining the league, this represents a net loss of one team, the first decrease in the number of teams in MSL since 2005.

THE Outlaws joined the league in 2004 as the Peelers, created a second team in 2008 and a third in 2010. Outlaws I and II have now effectively merged, and the team name lives on.

THE Bullfrogs started out in 2007 as the Lions' second team, More Lions, winning Division 3 in their first season, with a 13-3 record, the same as second-placed Thunder, whom they beat on head-to-head. The following year they stormed Division 2, coming second to Outlaws after the first rotation, which put them in the Playoff Division. After the brief diversion of the Division 2 Cup, where they lost in the final to Thunder, they completed the second half of the season with a 6-4 record, enough to put them into Division 1 in only their third season. There they did well enough to avoid the drop into the POD, and ended the season with a decent 7-10 record. In 2010 they did even better, finishing 4th, and the best of the rest, just behind clubmate Lions, whom they even beat 17-16 in a thrilling derby. 2010 saw a split from the Lions and a change of name, and, while avoiding the POD drop, their final 6-12 record saw them second-to-bottom in the division. The following year saw a further slight decline, as this time they did end up in the POD, hanging on to third place to ensure a return to Division 1. It was a similar story in 2012, ex-



cept this time Bullfrogs ended up below the cut in the POD, and started 2013 in Division 2. Initial success in the form of a perfect 8-0 record got them back into the POD, the last year of this structure, but again they fell short in the second half of the season, and finished 4th. However two of the teams above them declined promotion (you were allowed to do that in those days), so Bullfrogs accepted a relegation reprieve and started in Division 1. This turned out to be a bold but perhaps unwise move, as they completed a winless season, one of only four teams to "achieve" that unwanted statistic. So 2016 saw the Bullfrogs in Division 2, where they spent all but the last two weeks of the season in a promotion slot, but ending up 3rd with a 9-6 record and missed promotion only because one of

those losses was a forfeit. And so to their final season, last year, where they hovered around third place pretty much all summer, signing off with a 12-11 defeat of the Speeders which secured them an overall winning record 8-7.

THE More Lions/Bullfrogs' complete record reads:

P	W	T	L	F	RS	RC
173	85	1	86	1	2127	2227

Their only tie was in a cup game which they won on the roll-back rule.

WE also bid farewell to the **Moorkats** after four seasons as the Meerkats' second team, and the **Falcons** after just one and a half seasons.



New balls please

This is a reminder that MSL-supplied balls for the season cost £70. You can pay this along with your first week's match fees. Half the balls needed were handed out at the Captains' Meeting. The rest will be distributed in about 8 weeks' time.

Dodgers win Firstball

Mike Goff



DRY if not exactly warm weather blessed Manchester's now traditional pre-season Firstball tournament as 24 teams convened last weekend at Parris Wood High School – eight teams playing at Comp level and 16 at Rec, including a fair number of out-of-towners. Thanks to the hard work of the school staff, the pitches were in excellent condition, and thanks to the absence of rain, they stayed that way throughout.

The Comp tournament was a single division in which all the teams played one another before the top four teams competed for the Gold Cup and the bottom four for the Gold Plate. The Cup semi-finals saw the fourth-placed Dodgers beat the top-ranked Thunder, and similarly the lower-ranked Mavericks beat the Lions. In the final, the Dodgers took full advantage

of the strong wind into right field and claimed the title with a 22-3 victory over the Mavericks. Delighted Dodgers captain Tyler Lappage gave a lengthy press conference after his team's win, but it was all in Canadian so the reporters didn't understand.

In the Comp Plate semi-finals, Honey Badgers from Glasgow beat the Meerkats while the Greensox beat the Leeds Terriers. In the final, the Sox proved too strong for the Badgers and triumphed 16-6 despite some

heroic flying catches from Kate Williamson in right field preventing them from taking advantage of the wind in the same way the Dodgers did.

The Rec competition began with four groups of four teams: the top two teams in each group went into the Silver competition, and the bottom two into Bronze. Four new groups were then formed, so that each team played new opposition at their level. The top two teams in these groups went into the Cup



semi-finals, and the bottom two into the Plate semi-finals.

The Silver Cup semi-finals saw the Long Eaton Misfits narrowly beat the Speeders, and the London Raiders beat the Nottingham Tigers after an extra inning. The Raiders prevailed 19-8 in the final: a happy prelude to their long journey home.

In the all north-west Silver Plate semis the Outlaws beat the Spittin' Camels, and Mossley Mayhem fell to the Loan Sharks from Sefton. The Sharks raised interest rates on Merseyside by beating the Outlaws 9-2 in the final.

The Bronze Cup semi-finals saw Manchester's Two Tribes beat the Urmston Rippers and the Leeds Bobcats beat the Manchester Tigers to make the final. Inspired by GB star Nathan Barratt, who was unavailable on the Saturday, the Tribes took the trophy with a 22-10 victory in the final.

In the Bronze Plate semi-finals

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the Monmouth Rockets saw off the Didsbury Bats and the Rebels beat the Basehunters in another all-Manchester game. Having to wait two hours for their final meant that the Rebels' pitching line-up had a little too much light refreshment, and the Rockets took advantage to school them 12-0.

Registration for the Manchester Main tournament (August 5th and 6th) will begin this week so visit <http://www.manchester-softball.co.uk>

for more information and to sign up to play.

The Editor adds ... There was universal praise for our new tournament officer's first full tourney, especially since he stepped in at such short notice. Well done Mike, and big thanks from everyone. Also, if you lost any property, please contact Jeremy Fothergill, who has a few items.



XIVth annual Alex Hall tournament—3rd June

The 2017 Alex Hall Tournament will take place at Parrs Wood School from 9:00 to 18:00 on 3rd June, so you have lots of time to rearrange shifts, cancel holidays/weddings/revolutions against the Iron Throne, whatever needs to be done to ensure you can play.

The format will be the same as usual but with ten teams,

so the individual games will be shorter but there will be more of them, so each team plays all of the others.

It will be a week later than last year, so hopefully the weather will be a little better in the morning...

Player entries are now being accepted. Please download the entry form from the Alex Hall

Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/518681788191346/>

I hope you are all looking forward to the tournament as much as I am and that as many of you as possible come down to play to help us raise loads more money for the Christie.

Mike Goff

The black team performs a haka at last year's tournament



Northwest Series Tournament—this Saturday and July 1st

A brand new co-ed slowpitch tournament series organised by BSUK will be held in the Northwest in May and July this year. The first of these two one-day tournaments will be held at Parrs Wood on 6th May 2017. The series provides the opportunity of a great introduction to softball for rookie teams or for C-grade and D-grade rec teams looking to have some fun.

Although this Saturday's tournament is now full, there are still places available for the next one, on July 1st. Download an application form from the MSL website.

Meanwhile, of course spectators are welcome this Saturday.



Next week's games - Week 2 (9/10/11 May)

Division 1

Dodgers @ Thunder (3, TLF)

Last meeting 3 Aug 2016, Thunder won 16-14, and lead overall 11-5 in this week's most played fixture.

Lightning @ Mavericks (2, CE)

Last meeting 22 May 2013, Mavs won 14-9 and lead 2-0.

Lions @ Meerkats (4) Last meeting 15 July 2015, Lions won 11-4 and lead 2-0.

Greensox rest

Division 2

Mavericks II @ Camels II (6, IC) Last meeting 5 July 2016 (Division 3), Mavs II won 21-20 in 8 innings, and lead 2-0.

Speeders @ Mutineers (5, HS)

Last meeting 22 July 2015, Mutineers won 27-4 (5 inns) to take an 8-7 lead overall.

Sharks @ Mayhem (9, MD) Last meeting 29 June 2016, Sharks won 12-6 to square the series 1-1.

Camels rest

Division 3

Pirates @ Storm (8, MD/DD) Last meeting 21 July 2015, Storm won 17-7 and lead 4-1.

Rippers @ Outlaws (7, MG) First ever meeting.

Tigers @ Drizzle (6, AR) Last meeting 28 June 2016 (Division 4), Tigers won 31-13, their first win in 4 attempts, including one tie.

Bats rest

Division 4

Barflies @ Hurricanes (1, TLF) Last meeting 5 July 2016, Hurricanes won 21-6 (5 inns) and lead overall 3-1.

Blue Jays @ Vipers (6, SS/LA) First ever meeting for these two new teams.

Enforcers @ Hackers (4, PF) Last meeting 5 July 2016 (Division 3), Hackers won 15-10 but trail 3-9 overall.

Meteors @ Freeze (2, PN) First ever meeting.

Rebels @ Colt 45s (3, ML) Only previous meeting 21 August 2013, Rebels (then called Mayhem II) won 19-4 (4½ inns).

Titans @ Phoenix (7, DW) Only previous meeting 5 July 2016, Titans won 13-12.

Longest wait: Lightning and Mavs have not met since May 2013.

Most played: Dodgers @ Thunder: next week is their 17th meeting.

So close ... Camels II lost to Mavs II by the odd run in 41 in extra innings last time they met.

Can't get no worse.... Speeders lost by 23 runs last time they played the Mutineers.

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RESULTS AND STANDINGS - Last year's final standings

Returning to Division 1 are Meerkats and Lightning, the latter opening their campaign this week with a Club Thunder derby. With the merger of Outlaws and Outlaws II, Division 1 has only seven teams this season. After two rotations the division will split into top four and bottom three for a final half-rotation, with the bottom team being relegated to Division 2.

Division 2 likewise is again seven teams, with Camels and Mutineers dropping down, and Mavs II and Camels II stepping up to replace Storm, but with Bullfrogs folding, the Division will have the same structure as Division 1, but with the difference that, while two teams will be promoted, none will be relegated.

Division 3 sees Thursday night co-ed softball in Manchester for the first time, but again with reduced numbers thanks to the Moorkats' demise, and the Enforcers dropping to Division 4 along with the relegated Hackers and Rebels. Drizzle step up after last season's dramatic switch-around of Club Thunder's two representatives on the final day, along with the champion Tigers. As in Division 2, there's promotion for the top two teams, but no relegation for the rest.

Division 4 starts with 12 teams, and will split into two groups of six (with the possibility of a new team joining Division 5 at that stage). The top three will all be promoted, while next year's Div 4 structure will depend on numbers.

	P	W	T	L	F	RS	RC	Pct	Pt	GB
Division 1										
Lions (C)	17	15	0	2	0	302	115	.882	47	–
Thunder	17	12	0	5	0	217	171	.706	41	3
Greensox	17	11	0	6	0	243	185	.647	39	4
Mavericks	17	9	0	8	0	230	204	.529	35	6
Dodgers	17	9	0	8	0	238	182	.529	35	–
Outlaws	17	8	0	9	0	218	232	.471	33	1
Camels (R)	17	4	0	13	0	188	322	.235	25	5
Mutineers (R)	17	0	0	17	0	137	362	.000	17	9
Division 2										
Meerkats (C)	15	12	0	3	0	247	159	.800	39	–
Lightning (P)	15	11	0	4	0	209	164	.733	37	1
Bullfrogs	15	8	0	7	0	231	190	.533	31	4
Speeders	15	6	0	9	0	175	202	.400	27	6
Mayhem	14	7	0	7	0	196	176	.500	28	–
Sharks	14	6	0	8	0	173	182	.429	26	1
Storm (R)	14	1	0	12	1	96	254	.071	15	6½
Division 3										
Mavericks II (C)	16	13	1	2	0	309	171	.844	43	–
Camels II (P)	16	10	0	6	0	284	266	.625	36	3½
Outlaws II	16	8	2	6	0	208	183	.563	34	4½
Pirates	16	7	3	5	1	268	247	.531	32	5½
Moorkats	16	8	0	8	0	244	259	.500	32	5½
Bats	16	7	0	9	0	207	202	.438	30	6½
Enforcers	16	7	0	9	0	252	280	.438	30	6½
Hackers (R)	16	6	0	10	0	205	265	.375	28	7½
Rebels (R)	16	3	0	13	0	205	309	.188	22	10½
Division 4										
Tigers (C)	17	13	1	3	0	368	201	.794	44	–
Drizzle (P)	17	12	1	4	0	292	205	.735	42	1
Hurricanes	17	12	0	5	0	278	154	.706	41	1½
Rippers	17	11	0	6	0	274	205	.647	39	2½
Barflies	17	9	0	8	0	279	276	.529	35	4½
Phoenix	17	7	0	10	0	223	264	.412	31	6½
Colt 45s	17	7	0	10	0	185	233	.412	31	6½
Freeze	17	5	0	12	0	241	349	.294	27	8½
Falcons	17	3	0	14	0	186	347	.176	23	10½
Titans	9	1	0	8	0	76	168	.111	11	15½

Phoenix above Colt 45s on head-to-heads