



USE AND MISUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

An important message for GB Softball players, staff, families, friends and supporters from the GB Management Committee

Everyone knows that social media can be a powerful and positive tool for communicating and promoting information and ideas.

But we also know that social media can be used with destructive consequences, whether intended or not, and that this can be amplified by the fact that social media messages are often accessible far beyond the audience at which they may have been aimed.

GB Softball has already published guidelines for social media use by players, staff, families, friends and supporters. These guidelines are issued to all GB Team members and to the parents of junior players before tours and can be found here:

<http://www.britishsoftball.org/uploads/documents/Files/Social%20Media%20Guidelines.pdf>.

Unfortunately, during the 2017 competition season, there were two instances of social media misuse related to GB Teams that had negative consequences for both teams and individuals associated with our programmes.

One incident was dealt with quickly at the time by staff at the tournament concerned, but was a major and unnecessary distraction for that team. In the other instance, however, false information was posted, and as is the way with social media, there were numerous subsequent negative comments based on that original posting. The result is that the reputational damage suffered, though based on a falsehood, can never entirely be undone.

So we want to set out two clear and simple rules for the use of social media in relation to GB Softball Teams:

- 1) Use of social media to encourage, promote and spread positive information about GB Softball teams, players and programmes is welcomed.**

2) Use of social media to criticise GB Softball teams, players, staff or programmes, or to raise questions about team selection or tactics, is strictly forbidden, and any such social media posts will result in sanctions being applied.

Depending on the severity and source of any breach of this policy, sanctions can include de-selection of a player from the team. In this regard, players will be held responsible for any breach of the policy by their family, friends or supporters.

In making a judgment on sanctions, an important factor will be how soon any offending post or thread, once discovered, is deleted or removed.

Does this mean that we are stifling or suppressing questions or criticism in relation to our teams and programmes?

Absolutely not!

We need and welcome feedback, questions and criticism so that our programmes can improve, but this has to be done through private channels.

This is because putting any negative messages about GB Softball into the huge public domain that social media commands could have serious consequences for our programmes as a whole, including in vital areas such as fundraising and player recruitment.

Players on all GB Fastpitch Teams, and parents on all GB age-group fastpitch teams, have a chance to provide comprehensive feedback through surveys we conduct at the end of each competition season.

If there are more urgent questions or criticisms that anyone wants to raise, particularly during tournaments, these should be sent by email to the GB Management Committee at gbmc@britishsoftball.org, and will receive immediate attention.

We know that all our players and their families and friends want our teams to succeed. Our programmes are unfunded and are run on a shoestring, our staff are all volunteers, and we may sometimes make mistakes in trying to overcome these obstacles and compete against the best teams in Europe and the world. We need and want to learn from those mistakes, and we are happy to receive constructive comments and questions from anyone invested in our programmes.

But social media is not the place to do this; there are better ways, as set out above.

Thank you very much for your understanding and cooperation.

**The GB Management Committee
December 2017**