



British Baseball

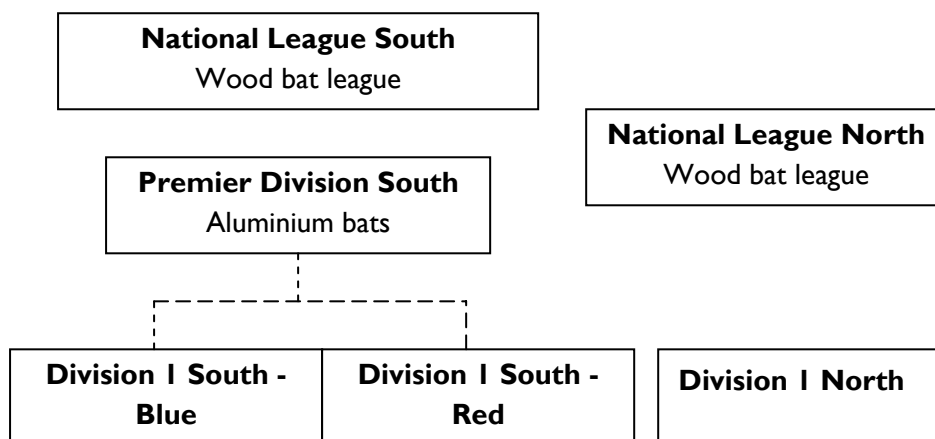
Baseball has been played in the UK since 1890, when it was introduced by two sources: Francis Ley, a Derby man who got interested on a trip to the US, and A.G. Spalding an American sporting goods businessman who saw opportunities to expand his business across the Atlantic.

Baseball reached its peak popularity in Britain in the years preceding World War II, with baseball teams adjoined with football clubs (hence Derby County's home ground was named the Baseball Ground), run at a professional standard with up to 10,000 spectators per game.

This ended when the war began in 1939 but the influx of large numbers of US servicemen ensured baseball continued as a pastime. Today, there are two league teams on US military bases. They are part of an expanding membership of more than 40 baseball teams and 875 adult players, ranging geographically from Cambridge to Liverpool, Southampton to Edinburgh.

There have been numerous league formats and governing bodies since 1890. The British Baseball Federation (BBF), as it is today, has governed the leagues since 1987. In 2003 BaseballSoftballUK came on board as the managing agency. BSUK has worked to create a modern baseball culture. Whilst in the past there have been peaks and troughs in baseball levels, the overriding aim now is to maintain and build on the current standards. The compact, tiered league system is designed to allow clubs and teams to establish themselves at a level and develop. Clubs nurture feeder teams, spread the sport in the community and, very importantly, generate a future for the sport by running youth teams.

BBF LEAGUES



There is a level for every standard of player and the leagues are populated by players from Britain, Europe, the Americas, Australia, South Africa, Japan and many other countries. The season runs from around May until September's post-season play-offs, the pinnacle of which is the Final 4 National Championships held in Brighton.

DID YOU KNOW?

Two baseball players have competed in Great Britain and then gone on to make it to the Major Leagues.

Roland Gladu played for West Ham in the London Major Baseball League in 1936 and 1937 before playing for the Boston Braves in 1944.

John Foster pitched for the Brighton Buccaneers in 1997 before appearing with the Atlanta Braves in 2002.

Gavin Marshall, who pitches for Hull, is believed to be the first British player to have played in a professional baseball league.

Some of Britain's most famous sporting heroes have also played baseball. Dixie Dean, the great Everton player, competed in baseball as did Jim Sullivan, one of the top all-time rugby league stars.

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