

THE 2026 SEASON: THE FULL PICTURE

To: All Voting Members

British Baseball Federation (BBF) reference: Senior Leagues Committee response ahead of the Extraordinary General Meeting on 23 September 2026. Circulated to all Voting Members and the British baseball community.

Date: September 2026

1. A statement from the Senior Leagues Committee

- 1.1 This has been the hardest season the three of us have known in this job, and we want to begin by speaking plainly, in our own words, before we set out the facts.
- 1.2 Between us we have run senior league baseball for six years. In that time the senior game has gone from 55 teams in 2021 to 102 in 2026, the largest it has ever been. We added a fifth division this season so that new and returning players had a level to start at, and 27 teams entered it. The Women's Baseball League has now completed four seasons and is still the only domestic women's league in Europe. Every result, standing and statistic is published. None of us is paid a penny. We do this in the evenings and at weekends, around full-time jobs, our families and our own clubs, because we want the sport to be bigger and better run than we found it.
- 1.3 2026 asked us questions the Handbook does not answer. Two clubs that had given us written assurances they could complete the season could not do so. Players began leaving those squads part-way through the year for clubs in contention. Other clubs, who had done everything asked of them, were left with half a fixture list. The individuals who had started those teams were left out of pocket, having paid field rent, team registration, kit and equipment months earlier on the strength of promises from players who then walked away. There was no precedent for any of it, no rule that answered it cleanly, and no time to wait: fixtures were due that weekend. We had to decide. In six years we have not faced anything like it.
- 1.4 Every one of those decisions was taken with the same question in mind. What happens to the clubs that kept their word? That is the thread running through this document, and we make no apology for it. Clubs that register properly, field their teams, travel, pay their fees and turn up should not finish the season worse off than clubs that do not.
- 1.5 This matters well beyond the clubs caught up in it this year. Whoever starts the next club in this country will put their own money down months before a ball is thrown, on nothing firmer than a group of players saying they will still be there in July. If the Federation shrugs when those promises are broken, and lets the players who break them walk straight into a club with a better record, fewer people will take that risk. That is how the game stops growing.
- 1.6 We did not get everything right, and this document does not pretend otherwise. Three things we got wrong are set out at section 5, in our own words, with what changes in 2027. We would rather say so ourselves than have it said for us.
- 1.7 What we find much harder to accept is the way this has been done. For roughly five months, claims about the three of us have been passed around the sport privately, in messages, in calls, and in a document assembled and circulated from club to club, without ever being put to us, and in some cases without the people making them being named at all. We were not asked for the correspondence. We were not asked for the dates. We were not asked for our side, because the point was never to test the claims; it was to collect signatures. By the time any of it reached us in writing it had been repeated so often that repetition had started to do the work of evidence.
- 1.8 That has not stopped. We have asked the BBF Secretary to provide the list of clubs that have signed this request, so that we know who is bringing these allegations against us. He has refused to provide it. We are therefore being asked to answer a case at a General Meeting without being told who is bringing it, which is not a position any member of this Federation should be placed in, whoever they are and whatever they are said to have done.



- 1.9 We would have answered every one of those claims months ago had anyone asked. We are answering them now. What follows is not a defence built on our word against theirs. It is dates, documents, notices and decisions, every one of which the Board holds and any member can ask to see. On the three decisions at the centre of this request, people outside this Committee have already looked at the full evidence and backed us: an independent reviewer dismissed the complaint against the Commissioner on 28 May, and the Board ratified our decisions on 3 August and 1 September.
- 1.10 We are not asking anyone to take our word for it, and we are not asking for sympathy. We are asking members to read what actually happened before voting on it, and to hold whatever is said at the meeting to the same standard we are held to here: if it is true, there will be a document behind it.
- 1.11 We understand the concern that the members of this Committee belong to clubs. That is true. It is also true of every member of the BBF Board, and of the members who have brought this request. No volunteer who has held these roles in the last decade has been without a club connection. The people who run British baseball come from its clubs.
- 1.12 Removing three volunteers with club ties would mean replacing them with others who have club ties of their own, open to the same allegation at the next EGM. The answer is not to change the people but to manage conflicts openly. That is what the changes at 6.1 and 6.4 do: declared interests on every decision, and any matter in which the whole Committee is conflicted going straight to the Board. We have already engaged with several individuals to expand the Committee for 2027 with a more diverse group, and we would also formally include Jason Tomms and David Becker, as scoring and officials directors, as members of the Senior Leagues Committee.
- 1.13 There is one last thing worth saying, and it matters more than what happens to the three of us. Every one of the people who run this sport is a volunteer. If three of them can spend six years growing the game, own their mistakes openly, be vindicated on every decision that has been independently examined, and still be removed on allegations that no one has ever had to stand behind and prove, then the question every member should ask before voting is a simple one. Who would take these jobs next year, and on what terms?
- 1.14 The rest of this document sets out what happened in 2026, what we decided and why, who has since reviewed those decisions, what we got wrong, what changes in 2027, and our position on each of the four motions. It closes with a personal statement from Chris Carter.

Chris Carter, Joe O'Connell and Rhodri Theaker
Senior Leagues Committee

2. What happened in 2026

- 2.1 Vetra and Richmond both had a history of failing to fulfil fixtures, which the Committee had raised with them and for which they had already been penalised. Before 2026, both assured us they had the players and commitment to finish the season, and supplied player lists.
- 2.2 By April it was clear neither club was in the position it had described. Fixtures between them went unplayed while both tried to recruit, and when they came to play other clubs they forfeited. Bristol, Bracknell and Birmingham, who kept every commitment, were left with around 12 of their 24 scheduled Division 2 West games.
- 2.3 In April and May, players from both squads were already looking to leave for other clubs in search of a title-winning season, and Croydon and Essex repeatedly pressed the Committee to let them.
- 2.4 Separately, Long Eaton joined NBL North, leaving pools of five in the North and four in the South. The agreed three-plus-one playoff split could no longer be defended and was changed to two-plus-two.

3. Checked and upheld

- 3.1 Each of the three decisions at the centre of the request has already been examined outside the Committee, with the full facts available.

Matter	How it was examined	Outcome
Refusing to let players transfer away from Vetra and Richmond mid-season. In this case, a player registered to Richmond's Division 2 squad, whom Essex asked us to release.	Essex made a formal complaint against the Commissioner over that refusal. The Board referred it to an independent reviewer from outside the Board, who examined the refusal and the reasons given for it.	Complaint dismissed, 28 May 2026. No substance found, and the refusal to release the player stood.
Richmond Division 3 playoff entry	Richmond appealed. The Board considered Richmond's written statement, timeline and supporting documents, and the Committee's correspondence with the club since late 2025.	Ratified. 3 August 2026.
The NBL playoff format, changed from three-plus-one to two-plus-two.	Croydon wrote to the Board with supporting documentation. The Board reviewed it and sought information from the Committee.	Format upheld, 1 September 2026. The Board found no clear evidence that London Mets benefited from the delay, and closed the matter.

- 3.2 The President's letter to Richmond set out what the Board considered and what it decided:

"The Board considered the evidence put before it including your written statement and attachment, the timeline supplied by you as well as correspondence to you from the SLC dating back until the end of 2025 and the offers of support to the club.

The Board concluded that it supported the SLC decision regarding your Division Three teams.

As a result of the Board's decision, this matter is now closed."

— BBF President to Richmond Baseball Club

- 3.3 Board members come from clubs across the Federation, including one of the clubs that requested this meeting. We do not ask you to take our word over anyone else's. We ask you to give weight to the people who have seen all the evidence.

4. The three decisions in question

- 4.1 The request sets out eight grounds, but they come back to three decisions. This section takes each in turn: what happened, what the Committee decided, and why that decision can be defended. The remaining points in the request are dealt with at the end of this section.
- 4.2 Every season brings situations the rulebook does not foresee. Clubs expect the Committee to use its judgement, and the Handbook gives it that role. Our test was the same each time: what keeps games being played, and what is fair to the clubs that keep their word? That test runs through each of the decisions below.

Decision 1: Vetra and Richmond players moving to other clubs

WHAT THE REQUEST SAYS

That Vetra and Richmond players were stopped from playing while players at other teams with four forfeits carried on, without due process and under the threat of large fines.

WHAT WE DECIDED

When Vetra and Richmond could no longer field their Division 2 teams, other clubs asked to take their players. Croydon asked in writing to take Vetra players. Essex asked for a Richmond player to be released on the basis that he had registered with Richmond by mistake. We were told that this player had never intended to play for Richmond. That was not correct: the player's Sport80 record shows that his club was changed from Essex to Richmond, and on Sport80 only the player himself can make that change. It was not a club error and it was not an administrative slip. We refused requests for players to leave the club they had committed to and join another part-way through the season. The answer was the same whichever club asked. No player was suspended, fined or charged with anything.

WHY IT IS DEFENSIBLE

- It protects the clubs that kept their word. Vetra's organiser paid field rent, team registration and other costs on the strength of players' promises. When those players walked away, one volunteer was left with the bill, and Bristol, Bracknell and Birmingham lost half their season. Letting the same players join another club mid-season would have rewarded the recruiting club and left the cost with everyone else.
- The reason for the moves mattered. By April and May, players were looking to leave in order to be part of a title-winning season. Groups of players moving from club to club is one of the biggest obstacles to building lasting clubs in this country.
- The number of forfeits was never the test. Under section 26, a team with four forfeits is disqualified from the National Baseball Championships and its results are disregarded for playoff seeding. That describes what happens to a team. It says nothing about its players joining other clubs, and at the other teams with four forfeits no such request arose.
- No club was fined. No fine of £2,000-£3,000 was imposed on or threatened to any club. The figure comes from a phone call between Joe O'Connell and a senior member of Croydon Baseball Club at 10:30pm, in which Joe explained what the players walking away would leave Vetra's organiser to cover himself: £1,200 in forfeit fees owed to the opposing clubs under section 26 (£50 for each forfeited game), the field hire and registration he had already paid on the strength of his players' commitment, and a possible penalty in line with the c. £250 Richmond was ordered to pay after its 2025 playoff forfeit. That was the cost falling on one volunteer because his players left, not a fine on any club. The opposing clubs were entitled to invoice Vetra for the forfeits and chose not to.
- The decision was properly communicated. It concerned one club's players and was sent to Vetra by email at its official club address.
- The language was accurate. "Forfeited the season" described the section 26 consequence of four forfeits. It did not mean Vetra had withdrawn, and we said so at the time.

INDEPENDENT CHECK

Essex's formal complaint against the Commissioner over the refusal to release a Richmond player was referred by the Board to an independent reviewer from outside the Board and dismissed on 28 May 2026.

Decision 2: Richmond's Division 3 teams and the playoffs

WHAT THE REQUEST SAYS

That the measure was disproportionate, that it punished Richmond again for 2025, and that the Commissioner had a conflict because his own club, Kent Buccaneers, took a playoff place.

WHAT HAPPENED

- On 1 May, Richmond warned that its Division 2 team would struggle. Players moved down to its Division 3 rosters with the Committee's approval, and the club was advised to protect its highest level.
- On 7 June, Richmond forfeited two Division 2 fixtures.
- We communicated to Richmond that as they had two historically strong Division 3 sides, a club acting properly would promote players to ensure they fulfilled fixtures at the highest level of the club and forfeit at the lowest.
- On 11 June, we told the club that its Division 3 teams would not be eligible for the Division 3 playoffs if they did not fulfil Division 2 fixtures.
- That same day, a senior member of Richmond Baseball Club told the Committee that the club expected to be able to fulfil its fixtures after all. In his words, "the D2 players are sounding more committed than I thought". The club was therefore telling us, on the day it was warned, that the problem was resolving itself.
- On 21 June, Richmond forfeited again. Its players were unwilling to play up, with one reason given being that they wished to win a league at Division 3.

WHAT WE DECIDED

Richmond Dragons and Richmond Knights were excluded from the 2026 Division 3 playoffs. Nothing else.

WHY IT IS DEFENSIBLE

- It was limited. The measure applied only to playoff entry. There was no fine and no individual suspension, and regular season results, standings and individual records were untouched. The Division 3 players broke no rule and were not penalised.
- It was fair to everyone else. Players who would have completed Richmond's Division 2 team played at Division 3 instead. Letting those teams compete for a Division 3 title would have rewarded the choice that left Bristol, Bracknell and Birmingham with half a season, and would have been unfair to the Division 3 clubs competing against them.
- It was within the Committee's remit. The Handbook makes the Committee responsible for competition structures, and section 22 allows it to restrict players rostered below their known level of ability, to ensure fair competition and prevent abuse.
- Lesser measures were considered. The notice explains why each would not have worked.
- 2025 was not relied on. The notice states that the 2025 postseason provision is not engaged and treats 2025 as background only. It credits Richmond's own attempts to resolve the position, makes no finding of dishonesty, and counts in Richmond's favour that the Committee approved its roster moves without fully appreciating their effect.
- There was no conflict in practice. Chris Carter declared his link to Kent Buccaneers. Richmond was told on 11 June, with most of the season still to play, when nobody could know which team would benefit. Kent's place followed from the final standings, and it qualified narrowly.

WHAT WE ACCEPT

We approved Richmond's roster moves in May without fully appreciating their consequence. The notice says so, and our 2027 procedures will address it.

INDEPENDENT CHECK

Richmond appealed, and the appeal was heard at a full meeting of the BBF Board. The Board considered Richmond's written statement, timeline and supporting documents, and the Committee's correspondence with the club since late 2025. It voted to uphold the Committee's decision, every member but one in favour, on 3 August 2026. The President told Richmond that the matter is now closed.

Decision 3: The NBL playoff format

WHAT THE REQUEST SAYS

That the change was badly communicated and that some clubs were told before others. The request goes further than that. What it puts to members is that Joe O'Connell knew the format was changing, deliberately kept it from NBL South clubs, and did so in order to gain a competitive advantage for London Mets in the NBL. That is an allegation of dishonesty, and we answer it directly.

WHAT HAPPENED

- In December 2025 the Committee agreed three South qualifiers and one North, on the basis of four clubs in each pool.
- Long Eaton then joined NBL North, making the pools five against four. Essex had already questioned the fairness of the original split while the pools were level.
- On 10 March an NBL North club proposed two plus two. On 11 March the Commissioner decided to adopt it.
- On 27 April the format and schedule were announced to all clubs on Spond.

WHAT WE DECIDED

Two NBL South and two NBL North clubs qualify for the playoffs.

WHY IT IS DEFENSIBLE

- It is fairer. Three places from a pool of four and one from a pool of five could no longer be defended.
- It affects qualification only. Regular season fixtures and results were the same under either format.
- It was announced when it always is. The format has been formally announced in April every year: on Spond on 23 April 2024, 1 April 2025 and 27 April 2026. The schedule cannot be finalised until venues are settled.
- The conflict was declared and managed. Joe O'Connell argued against the change, declared his conflict and left the decision to the Commissioner. Rhodri Theaker also advised against it. The WhatsApp logs were provided to the BBF to support this, and contributed to the Board's decision to support the Committee.
- London Mets gained nothing. The change cut the South pool's playoff places from three to two. When it was announced, London Mets were bottom of that pool at 1-3 and needed to climb two places instead of one. The London Mets manager, Derrick Cook, joined the South managers' protest the day after.
- The recruitment claim was not upheld. The suggestion that clubs recruited on the strength of early knowledge was put to the Board and rejected. Its written decision records that there is "no clear evidence that the London Mets benefited from the communication delay" and that "any comments to the contrary are purely speculation with no supporting evidence".

WHAT WE ACCEPT

Clubs had asked for years to be kept better informed, and informal updates were an attempt to do that. As a result some clubs heard about the original format early, and when it changed on 11 March, not every club that had heard about it was told. The 47 days before the formal announcement were too long. From 2027, informal contact on competition matters stops (section 6).

INDEPENDENT CHECK

Croydon Baseball Club wrote to the Board about the NBL playoff format, with supporting documentation. The Board reviewed it, sought information from the Committee, and upheld the format. Its written decision to the club says:

"Having reviewed it and sought information from the Senior Leagues Committee, the decision is to keep the format for 2026 as two teams from NBL South and two teams from NBL North.

There is no clear evidence that the London Mets benefited from the communication delay. Any comments to the contrary are purely speculation with no supporting evidence.

The decision to move to 2:2 was made by an elected board member and was within his remit after considering all the information he had before him.

This matter is now closed and we will not accept any further correspondence on this issue under any circumstances."

— BBF Board to Croydon Baseball Club, 1 September 2026

The same letter records the Committee's acceptance that NBL South teams were not told for 47 days, and the steps being taken to prevent it happening again in 2027. We have set those out at section 6.

Other points in the request

THE BRISTOL DISCIPLINARY NOTICES

We accept this. Two disciplinary notices from the 2025 playoffs waited 324 days. Normally a Committee member with no conflict handles a disciplinary case, but here there was none: Joe O'Connell was playing in the game, Rhodri Theaker is from Bristol Baseball Club, and Chris Carter was in the umpiring crew who ejected the player. The case was ultimately decided by an independent party. It should have gone to the Board straight away. We are sorry, and this is fixed for 2027.

BAD WEATHER AT THE 2025 POSTSEASON

This is a separate matter from the disciplinary notices above. The request also criticises the handling of the 2025 playoffs when the weather turned against us. No BBF postseason had ever had a written contingency plan for bad weather. The 2025 playoffs showed that one was needed, and we did not wait to act on it: a contingency plan was built into the 2026 postseason schedule published to clubs, and it will carry into 2027. We accepted our mistakes in writing to the Board on 1 September, and we accept them again here.

5. What we got wrong

- 5.1 We ended the Cornish Pioneers' season after four forfeits. We corrected this and did not repeat it.
- 5.2 Informal updates meant some clubs heard about the NBL format before others, and not all of them heard when it changed.

- 5.3 Two Bristol disciplinary notices waited 324 days because there was no route for a case in which all three of us were conflicted.

6. What will change for 2027

- 6.1 Conflicts. Any matter in which all three Committee members are conflicted goes straight to the Board.
- 6.2 Formal channels only. Committee business will go only through the Committee's official email address and official announcements. No informal discussion of competition matters with clubs, even between friends.
- 6.3 The same information for everyone. Every competition update goes to all affected clubs at the same time, through the same channel, by a fixed date.
- 6.4 Written decisions. Every decision affecting a club will state the rule relied on, the reasons, any declared interests and the route of appeal.
- 6.5 Mid-season squad collapse. A Handbook rule for 2027 setting out what happens when a club can no longer field a team.

7. The motions

- 7.1 There are four motions, and they are not equal. Motion 1 creates a new power of removal. Motion 3 is the motion that removes us, and it cannot take effect unless Motion 1 passes first. Those are the two that matter, and we ask you to vote against both.
- 7.2 Motion 1 would insert new clauses 7.3 to 7.12 into the Constitution. It would let a General Meeting remove a Board Official by simple majority, whether or not any of the existing grounds apply, and clause 7.12 would let the same motion direct the Board to remove the members of any committee that Official chairs.
- 7.3 Board Officials serve two-year terms, so members already decide who holds those offices at regular elections. Between elections, clause 7.1 of the Constitution allows a Board Official to be removed for conduct that brings the BBF into disrepute, and gives that judgment to the Board, which has the evidence and can hear both sides. Our conduct has been tested this year: a formal complaint against the Commissioner was referred by the Board to an independent reviewer and dismissed.
- 7.4 Motion 1 would replace that with removal without grounds, at short notice, at any time of year. That would bring needless instability and a heavy administrative burden to a federation run by volunteers. Had this meeting been called mid-season, removing the people who run fixtures, registrations and discipline would have disrupted the season, and the damage to the sport would have lasted well beyond it.
- 7.5 Clause 7.12 goes further again, and members should look at it closely before voting. The rights it offers, to respond in writing and to speak at the meeting, are given only to Officials. Joe O'Connell and Rhodri Theaker are not Officials. They are members of a committee, and under this clause they could be removed without any right to answer the case in writing or to speak to it in the room. Whatever members think of the three of us, we ask you not to write that into the Constitution.
- 7.6 Motion 2 depends on Motion 1. It changes how a vacancy is filled: by election at the same meeting, with the person elected serving until the AGM. We ask members to consider whether a change of that weight should be made at a meeting called at short notice, or at the AGM, where it can be properly debated.



- 7.7 Motion 3 is the motion that removes us. It would remove Chris Carter as Senior Affiliated Clubs League Commissioner and direct the Board to remove Joe O'Connell and Rhodri Theaker from the Senior Leagues Committee. The only reason it gives is that we have lost the confidence of the Voting Members. It makes no finding on any of the decisions set out in this document, and the notice convening this meeting states that the allegations have not been determined and that no finding has been made on them. We ask you to reject it, and to decide it on the whole picture, as the Board did.
- 7.8 Motion 4 would change how votes are allocated between clubs. The Senior Leagues Committee takes no position on it and leaves it to each club's judgement.
- 7.9 We will attend the meeting and answer every question put to us. The correspondence referred to in this response is held by the Board.

8. A closing statement from the Commissioner

- 8.1 When I first stood for this role at the beginning of the 2021 season, I lost the election. The official who won it resigned shortly afterwards and, with the season already under way, there was no Commissioner in place and only two members left on the BBF Board.
- 8.2 I was asked whether I would step in to see the season through and help the new Board through the political struggle it was in the middle of. I accepted. I did it because I care about British baseball and I wanted to make a difference.
- 8.3 I was 20 years old. I joined the Board, ran the leagues for the season, organised the playoffs and managed the disputes, and I did all of it with the help of a small number of volunteers, among them Joe O'Connell and Rhodri Theaker. That was on top of the work that went into Board matters.
- 8.4 At the end of that season I stood for the role at the AGM, and our membership elected me.
- 8.5 I have carried on doing all of the above for the five seasons since. In that time I have been re-elected three times by the membership, unopposed on each occasion.
- 8.6 I have given my absolute all to administering six seasons of British baseball, and I would not have done any of it differently.
- 8.7 In return for that service I have been accused of cheating, of discriminating and of abusing my position, to name only three. I have had my car keyed at Farnham Park a week after dealing with an on-field disciplinary matter. My own father took to social media to call for a vote of no confidence in me. If that does not tell you that I do not abuse my position and do not act with bias, I do not know what will. And yet here I am, still working my socks off so that everyone in our community has a season to play.
- 8.8 I ask you to read this document and to consider what Joe, Rhodri and I have said. If you want to understand any of it better, or you want clarity on a particular point, I invite you to contact any of us before the meeting and ask.
- 8.9 Judge me on my achievements and on my principles, and not on the small-minded views of a few who see me as an obstacle to taking advantage of other clubs, and of unusual situations, in ways that serve only themselves.
- 8.10 When I first got involved in running club and team administration in this country, teams posted their results on a Facebook group. We now have a stats page where every game is scored, every statistic is visible, and results and standings are live, so that everyone can see what is happening in British baseball. Standards have risen over my six years in this role, and that is no coincidence. I have pushed them, because I want the best version of British baseball for everyone in it.



- 8.11 Thank you for allowing me to serve British baseball for the last six seasons. I hope to be given the choice to see out the remainder of my term.

Chris Carter

Senior Affiliated Clubs League Commissioner

Kind regards,

Chris Carter, Senior Affiliated Clubs League Commissioner

Joe O'Connell, Senior Leagues Committee

Rhodri Theaker, Senior Leagues Committee

Senior Leagues Committee, British Baseball Federation