# Goalball UK Player Rating Guidance

Last updated: May 2023

## Introduction

This guidance has been developed by the Goalball UK Club and Competitions Committee (CC) in conjunction with key coaches from within the sport. The guidance aims to:

1. Allow coaches to accurately assess their player’s ratings for levels of competition.
2. Help coaches and players understand the key skills and attributes required to progress and develop within and between the levels.
3. Provide an objective framework for The CC to assess and monitor player ratings.

The guidance covers five key areas of goalball: court awareness; attack including passing; defence; communication; and game understanding. Each area identifies key skills and attributes associated with the six player ratings 1 through to 6 (see Player Rating section below).

While this list is not exhaustive and may not always use the terms you traditionally use in your coaching or playing, we believe it broadly covers the core elements of goalball in a manageable format to allow the three aims to be met.

We have also included (on pages 15 and 16) specific advice regarding clothing, equipment, and padding.

## Player Rating

We understand that every goalball player is different, and that coaches will observe and interpret skills and attributes slightly differently, so this guidance is just that. It is therefore not a completely faultless way to objectively determine the exact rating of every single player - but will significantly help.

Players with the same rating will not be identical as they will have different combinations of the key skills and attributes in each of the six key areas. It may be that a player is performing lower or higher in one or more of the five key areas than their overall assigned rating.

### Assessment

Players will be assessed by their club coaches initially with The CC having the remit to confirm or move a player’s rating based on performance in witnessed training sessions or competitions.

The CC may seek the opinion of other Goalball UK staff, coaches, and officials where appropriate and, when necessary, reasonable adjustments can be discussed such as giving players a suitable period of time in which to gain further experience and therefore develop.

All player ratings are in the context of the current playing numbers and the standard of players within the structure. This is to allow Goalball UK to create balanced competition opportunities across all levels of play.

### Assessment During a Season

During a season a club may move a player’s rating up by notifying The CC without a formal request. If The CC feels a player has been moved up a rating incorrectly, they will inform the club.

If a club wishes to move a player’s rating down a level, they must make a formal request to The CC in writing outlining the reasons why.

All player ratings will be subject to a formal review by Goalball UK and The CC between March and May each season.

### Player ratings in Goalball UK competitions and events

The competition rules set out that players can play at certain levels based on their rating:

* Pre-Competition = Pre-Regional events
* Rating 1 = Regional
* Rating 2 = Regional and Intermediate
* Rating 3 = Intermediate
* Rating 4 = Intermediate and Super League
* Rating 5 = Super League
* Rating 6 = Super League

## Assessment Considerations

**Goalball UK has a commitment to the duty of care to all players.**

### Safeguarding

#### **Physical Harm**

Players may be required to move up a level if they are showing excessive shot power which may physically harm the opposition (at that level) or, conversely, they may be required to move down a level if they are at risk of being physically harmed by the shot power of the opposition.

#### **Emotional Wellbeing**

Coaches need to consider whether players can cope with competition factors and react appropriately, relevant to their level of play. This includes factors such as:

* Court time – being substituted or not being selected to play
* Penalty situations – being picked to defend a team penalty or not being picked to take an attacking penalty
* Sportsmanship – reacting to defeat and celebrating results
* Being targeted by the opposition
* Interaction with others – playing in a team (and against other teams) with different personalities and behaviours
* Feedback – giving and receiving feedback on performance (both negative and positive)
* Abiding by the Goalball UK code of conduct

### Minimum Age

The minimum age to enter each level of competition is:

* Regional: aged 8 plus
* Intermediate: aged 11 plus
* Super League: aged 16 plus

However, we recognise there may be some exceptions based on physical and emotional maturity plus previous competitive experience. Coaches should [**email the CC**](mailto:thecc@goalballuk.com) to discuss any such individuals.

### Entry to Regional Level Competition

To encourage a have a go and inclusive attitude from clubs and coaches, we do not want to enforce a minimum level of ability so players may be entered into competition without yet having all the key skills and attributes to rate them as a 1. However, we would ask you to seriously consider whether participating would be a worthwhile experience for both the individual player and their team, as success may be limited. (i.e. would it be more appropriate for them to experience a tournament, from the bench, as a non-player first or attend a friendly pre-competition event to gain some experience).

### Training and Competition Opportunity

We encourage clubs to offer players as much court time as possible to help them improve. Players that are gaining additional experiences away from their own club environment are likely to progress at a faster pace. Players who are engaged in talent pathway activity or in performance squads will be encouraged to push themselves to play at the highest appropriate level recognising their training and competition opportunity away from their club.

### Sport Experience

When first assessing a player, it is good practice to consider their experience in other sports. A player’s physical literacy may mean they can bypass Regional level and join at Intermediate level - we would typically expect this of an adult with a background in playing sport and/ or who has had the benefit of visual learning.

### Additional Disabilities

Goalball is inclusive to players who may have additional disabilities other than sight loss. However, the assessment is of only the person’s goalball ability.

## Skills and Attributes (table descriptors)

The following pages comprise of five tables covering the five key areas:

Table 1. Court Awareness (pages 5 and 6)

Table 2. Attack including passing (pages 7 and 8)

Table 3. Defence (pages 9 and 10)

Table 4. Communication (pages 11 and 12)

Table 5. Game Understanding (pages 13 and 14)

Each table lays out the skills and attributes associated with the six player ratings (1 to 6) for that key area.

For each key area there is an overview and then the table consisting of two columns and six rows. The 1st column identifies the rating number, the 2nd column lists the skills and attributes (multiple points) associated with that rating. Each player rating (one to six) has its own row.

## Table 1 – Court Awareness

Overview: As players progress through the levels, they generally demonstrate more advanced orientation, mobility, spatial awareness and tracking skills, so become more competent, confident, and independent.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Rating 1 | 1.1. Can transfer to their feet to shoot, using the goal to orientate.  1.2. Knows where the junction of the side-line and the wing line is so can be ready to receive the ball when it is dropped into play – may require some audible cues.  1.3. Can move between the goal and their orientation line(s) independently but may require some audible cues to change/re-find their position; meet for a timeout or penalty; or when being subbed on and off the court.  1.4. Can locate a ‘loose’ ball around them (up to 3m away) after initial contact and then return to their original position.  1.5. Is beginning to track where the ball is coming from (left, right, centre) and where it is going to (left, right, centre). |
| Rating 2 | 2.1. Will drive off the goal towards the highball line when shooting and return to their position.  2.2. Can collect the ball from the opposite wing - may require some audible cues.  2.3. Can locate all 3 positions on court and change within a game when prompted by a coach.  2.4. Knows who is best placed to locate a ‘loose’ ball and can collect and return to their position.  2.5. Can accurately track the ball and communicate to teammates (from centre). |
| Rating 3 | 3.1. Can take shots from different positions, and return to a chosen position, but movement may still lack speed and efficiency.  3.2. Can efficiently switch between all three positions in a game independently.  3.3. Is beginning to track the game by listening to the opposition, coaches, and referees as well as the ball.  3.4. Understands the use of movement and noise as deception.  3.5. Is beginning to assist others with their orientation on court when required. |
| Rating 4 | 4.1. Will take shots from different positions and return to any position.  4.2. Will use movement and noise to deceive the opposition.  4.3. Can come to the bench from on court to off court to collect information.  4.4. Will track the game by listening to the opposition, coaches, and referees as well as the ball.  4.5. Can confidently assist others with their orientation on court when required. |
| Rating 5 | 5.1. Is comfortable taking different types of shots from any position and returning to any position (movement).  5.2. Will move with speed and adjust noise as required to create deception.  5.3. Is rarely out of position on court and mainly uses the orientation lines as checks.  5.4. Can defend the ball on instinct when out of position (awareness of position on court).  5.5. Will track the game by listening to the opposition, coaches, and referees as well as the ball (and then influence the game based on this information - see Table 5). |
| Rating 6 | 6.1. Is comfortable taking all types of shots from any position and returning to any position (movement).  6.2. Is very rarely out of position on court and only uses the orientation lines as checks.  6.3. Personal court awareness is very well established and can support others on court during the game. |

## Table 2 – Attack including passing

Overview: as players progress through the levels, they generally demonstrate more variety of shot with a smoother execution of technique plus an increase in power and accuracy.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Rating 1 | 1.1. Will transfer to their feet to shoot, getting the shot on target within the rules.  1.2. This will be built up to:  a) Releasing the ball with one hand – demonstrating a forward/backward swinging technique (rather than a wide swinging technique).  b) Driving off the goal towards the high ball line (e.g. 1 step, 3 steps, 5 steps, etc.).  c) Releasing the ball quickly (i.e. not conceding a 10 second penalty) - may need reminding.  1.3. Will often require communication (feedback) to correct inaccuracy.  1.4. Can execute a short pass (when prompted by teammates or coach). |
| Rating 2 | 2.1. Will drive off the goal, attacking the highball line when shooting, and will start to make decisions about where to shoot from.  2.2. Will have a more fluid throwing technique (i.e. not robotic) with synchronisation of the run up, backswing, release, and follow through.  2.3. Will generate (from run up) and transfer (from backswing and release) power to the ball.  2.4. Can accurately aim at ‘low’ and ‘high’ numbers.  2.5. Knows of, and begins to experiment with, different types of shots.  2.6. Passing:  a) Can independently execute a short pass.  b) Can execute a long pass and a handover pass (when prompted by teammates or coach). |
| Rating 3 | 3.1. Will create movement shots with teammates - may still need to orientate using audible cues and/or goals.  3.2. Is starting to develop a variety of shots – smooth, bounce and rotational.  3.3. Will generate (from run up) and transfer (from backswing and release) significant power to the ball.  3.4. Can aim at specific numbers (1 to 7).  3.5. Can execute all types of pass independently.  3.6. Can pass without direct communication (‘offloads’ or ‘handovers’).  3.7. Is beginning to practice throwing with non-dominant hand. |
| Rating 4 | 4.1. Can use movement patterns to make a variety of shots more effective i.e. less predictable for the opposition.  4.2. Is more confident at executing a variety of shots, including speed of return, changing the pace of the game.  4.3. Is starting to develop a bounce shot - this is acknowledged as key to scoring goals at the higher level.  4.4. Can accurately aim at specific numbers (1 to 7).  4.5. Demonstrates an extensive range of passing within team tactics.  4.6. Can throw with non-dominant hand but with limited success. |
| Rating 5 | 5.1. Consistently uses movement patterns to make a variety of shots more effective i.e. less predictable for the opposition.  5.2. Consistently executes a variety of shots, including speed of return, changing the pace of the game.  5.3. Has an effective bounce shot with the ability to control the release and landing point(s).  5.4. Has the ability to throw with reasonable speed and accuracy using non-dominant hand. |
| Rating 6 | 6.1. Has a highly effective bounce shot with consistent height and speed, with the ability to maintain this for a 24-minute game and the duration of a tournament.  6.2. Has a highly effective smooth shot with consistent speed and accuracy, with the ability to maintain this for a 24-minute game and the duration of a tournament.  6.3. Has the ability to throw with speed and accuracy using non-dominant hand. |

## Table 3 – Defence

Overview: As players progress through the levels, they generally become more skilled at being in the right place on court at the right time (i.e. improved court awareness and game understanding) but also at having their body in the right position to stop the ball from going past/over/through. There is also a greater focus on team defence systems and covering the whole court.

To provide context, the Great Britain squads aim to have a 93%-96% success rate from open play shots to win games on a consistent basis. This can be translated and worked towards across all levels of play and is a way of tracking and rewarding defensive play.

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| --- | --- |
| Rating 1 | 1.1. Can transfer from the ready position into the barrier position.  1.2. Understands defensive movements and decisions based on tracking of the ball.  1.3. Is likely to be static (on orientation line) whilst defending with very with limited movement to defend the ball.  1.4. Will attempt to get into the barrier position although may have weaknesses at the ends of the body (hands and feet) or the ball may roll over/under them.  1.5. May lack confidence in diving towards the ball or when being hit by the ball (crunching). |
| Rating 2 | 2.1. Will always transfer from the ready position into the barrier position.  2.2. Based on tracking skills, has increased movement in the push phase (hand and legs) of the dive to defend the ball and more of the court will be evident.  2.3. Development of the barrier with better positioning of the body to ensure stronger core, hands, and feet – but likely to still make errors.  2.4. Begins to understand the development of team defence, wrapping the ball, shifting, and covering.  2.5. Has increased confidence to defend the ball.  2.6. Penalty defence - recognises the difference in size of court (9m) to defend and can attempt to save the ball from a standing position. |
| Rating 3 | 3.1. Uses tracking skills to identify who needs to defend the ball and then understands their role to support through cover defence.  3.2. Consistent barrier with good positioning of the body to ensure stronger core, hands, and feet – so less likely to make errors.  3.3. Development of defensive techniques to defend a variety of shots including the bounce shot barrier and wrapping the ball.  3.4. Has a good understanding of a shift and how it applies in the game to create a defensive system.  3.5. Can adjust penalty defence position based on where they think the ball is coming from and has the understanding to use deception tactics. |
| Rating 4 | 4.1. Has competent tracking skills so can identify who needs to defend the ball and will provide support as required.  4.2. Consistently uses the correct defensive technique to defend a variety of shots including identifying the type/height of bounce to ensure the barrier and body is in the correct position to defend the ball.  4.3. Has the ability to understand different defensive starting set ups and the impact this can have on the opposition game plan.  4.4. Has the ability to play all 3 positions on court and understands how swapping between positions can impact the opposition.  4.5. During a penalty, uses defensive strategies or deception techniques to influence the attacker and will now also be confident in completely committing to the ball with the dive from a standing position. |
| Rating 5 | 5.1. Consistently knows who needs to defend the ball and will provide support as required.  5.2. Can independently adapt or change defensive technique in a game to defend different types of shot.  5.3. Actively does everything they can to minimise the risk of conceding goals but acknowledges that great goals do happen and can move on when they do (positive mindset).  5.4. Can defend all types of shots with success but may lack some consistency across a full game 24-minute game and the duration of a tournament. |
| Rating 6 | 6.1. Can defend all types of shots with success, with the ability to maintain this for a 24-minute game and the duration of a tournament.  6.2. Has the ability to play in multiple defensive line ups or styles. |

## Table 4 – Communication

Overview: as players progress through the levels, they generally communicate more effectively (before, during and after competition) with their teammates, coaching staff, and tournament personnel.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Rating 1 | 1.1. Makes basic calls and responses that are functional to their role e.g. got the ball or asking a teammate for an audible cue.  1.2. Can receive basic communication from the coach.  1.3. Listens and responds to basic referee calls – may need reminders. |
| Rating 2 | 2.1. Still makes basic functional calls but will also communicate to support personal techniques and teamwork e.g. moving to throw, collecting a loose ball, or executing a long pass etc.  2.2. Is beginning to build confidence in providing lead communication to others on court e.g. offering praise or constructive feedback.  2.3. Is beginning to develop understanding of the impact of the amount of communication, use of volume and tone.  2.4. Is beginning to listen to the entirety of the game (e.g. ball, referee, coach, teammates, opposition, and surroundings). |
| Rating 3 | 3.1. Calls have become automated and timing is effective for teammates and team tactics.  3.2. Can play a key role in communicating on court with teammates and the bench - likely to be receiving and giving feedback during the game.  3.3. Understands the use and impact of different communication styles in different game situations.  3.4. Listens to the entirety of the game and can prioritise information to impact the game by responding accordingly (e.g. change of position in the opposition). |
| Rating 4 | 4.1. Effective communication is now used intuitively in all technical aspects (e.g. execution of a skill) of the game.  4.2. Is developing leadership skills, working towards being the lead communicator on court for the duration of the game.  4.3. Uses the appropriate communication style for the game situation.  4.4. Begins to communicate personal feelings about own and team performance in a constructive way - immediately on court and/or in team meetings. |
| Rating 5 | 5.1. Has the ability to be the lead communicator on court for the duration of the game.  5.2. Can adapt to different communication styles considering that players are likely to play in different teams.  5.3. Is confident to communicate personal feelings about own and team performance in a constructive way - immediately on court and/or in team meetings. |
| Rating 6 | 6.1. Has the experience to play in different styles and can adapt to different opposition styles.  6.2. Does not allow the oppositions style of communication to negatively impact their game. |

## Table 5 – Game Understanding

Overview: As players progress through the levels, they generally demonstrate a greater knowledge, understanding and application of the rules and tactics.

Additionally, they are more aware of how lifestyle factors and environmental conditions impact on performance. For example:

* Nutrition (i.e. what you eat and drink before, during and after both training and competition)
* Physical preparation (i.e. gym work, warming up and cooling down; rest and recovery; injury prevention and rehabilitation, etc.)
* Mental preparation (i.e. mindset going into a game or tournaments)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Rating 1 | 1.1. Has an understanding of the basic rules linked to attack and defence.  1.2. Is focused on executing their individual skills and techniques during the game.  1.3. Will need lots of instruction and reassurance during the game and at timeouts.  1.4. Has a basic understanding of the 1 to 7 number system. |
| Rating 2 | 2.1. Has a basic understanding of the wider game rules and their importance.  2.2. Begins to understand how their actions and decisions can impact the team’s performance and tactics.  2.3. Will still require instruction and reminders and reinforcement of game tactics.  2.4. Has a good understanding of the 1 to 7 number system. |
| Rating 3 | 3.1. Has a good understanding of the rules and can apply them to key game situations.  3.2. Can understand each individual role in the team and how they can adapt to suit the team tactics.  3.3. Is comfortable at taking instructions from the bench during the game and will attempt to act on them.  3.4. Is beginning to understand potential differences in the playing environment that can impact on performance e.g. acoustics, floor, goals, and other changeable factors.  3.5. Can apply the 1 to 7 number system in all aspects of the game. |
| Rating 4 | 4.1. Knows the rules and how to apply them in game situations including from the bench.  4.2. Can deliver team tactics on court and begin to guide and correct teammates.  4.3. Can receive detailed instructions from the bench and formulate in game tactics.  4.4. Can adapt to differences in the playing environment that can impact on performance e.g. acoustics, floor, goals, and other changeable factors.  4.5. Can create detailed tactics before the game. |
| Rating 5 | 5.1. Actively applies the rules in game situations to benefit the team and can constructively challenge and seek clarification for decisions in an appropriate manner.  5.2. Attempts to deliver team tactics under pressure and adapt in key moments in the game.  5.3. Can input into the analysis the opposition before and during the game to create and influence team tactics.  5.4. Can play in any environment without distractions and changeable factors impacting on performance.  5.5. Is comfortable with a two-way tactical dialog between the bench and teammates during the game. |
| Rating 6 | 6.1. Can analyse the opposition before and during the game to create and influence team tactics.  6.2. Can consistently deliver team tactics under pressure and adapt in key moments in the game. |

## Clothing, equipment, and padding

As in any sport, there are rules as to what a goalball player can (or cannot) wear, which will also be influenced by personal preference and budget. [**IBSA rule 5.4**](https://www.ibsasport.org/sports/goalball/rules/)states that clothing, equipment, and padding must not extend more than 10cms in any direction from the body. Additionally, if a Goalball UK official or Tournament Director deems that any of the clothing, equipment or padding that a player is wearing is inappropriate, they can intervene.

### Clothing

In accordance with Goalball UK’s risk assessment, players must always wear clothing that is appropriate for physical activity. This includes clean, non-marking trainers. A numbered playing shirt must be worn which can either be long or short sleeved and padded goalkeeping style shorts or trousers are recommended. Skins/sleeves/base layers/compression clothing are allowed.

Players need to consider what will provide them with the best possible range of movement whilst feeling comfortable and protected, helping to regulate body temperature as well as reducing the risk of bumps and bruises plus surface burns (when sliding along the floor).

It is advisable not to wear any items of clothing that are too loose fitting/baggy or that have external drawstrings (e.g. a hoodie) as they could be a trip or strangulation hazard. Likewise, anything with buckles, buttons or zips should be avoided as they can impale the skin (when sliding along the floor).

Players must not wear glasses or have anything in their pockets. We strongly advise players not to wear jewellery during the game. If a player chooses to wear jewellery and it is deemed to be obstructive by referee and or causes a delay in the game the player will receive a delay of game penalty.

Prescribed hearing aids are allowed to be worn (at the player’s own risk).

### Equipment and padding

Eye shades are compulsory at every level of Goalball UK competition and, for hygiene reasons, every player should always have their own pair. [**Goalfix Sports**](https://goalfixsports.com/product-category/goalball-goggles-eyeshades/) are the recommended supplier.

It is strongly advised that all male players should wear appropriate groin protection (e.g. a cricket box) and all female players should wear appropriate breast protection. Chest protection designed for both male and female players, covering the wider chest area, is allowed.

Additional padding for the elbows, hips and knees is recommended, as well as shin pads, with different shapes, sizes, and styles available. Items with hard outer shells are not recommended as they can hinder player movement and deflect rather than cushion the ball. They may also mark the floor and make an unwanted noise (e.g. when hit by the ball or in contact with the floor).

Goalkeeping style gloves although allowed are not recommended. Fingerless style cycling or weightlifting gloves are a better alternative, as they give greater flexibility whilst still protecting the hands and providing grip on the ball and the floor but are not required.

Examples of equipment suppliers can be found on the [**Goalball UK website**](http://goalballuk.com/the-sport/equipment/)**.**

Players may choose to wear a gum shield, especially if they have fixed dental braces (but this can be detrimental to communication).

In exceptional circumstances, it may be advisable for a player to wear a helmet, but this would need to be approved by The CC. Please contact Goalball UK initially for further information.

**Document end.**