



Westwood Baseball Association – P.O. Box 341, Westwood, NJ 07675

WESTWOOD BASEBALL ASSOCIATION **POSITION REGARDING METAL VS. WOOD BATS**

As a result of the unfortunate incident last summer (2006) where a Wayne Little League player sustained an exceedingly rare injury as a result of being struck in the chest with a batted ball, media scrutiny has been directed at the use of metal bats by youth leagues and the attendant safety issues surrounding same. The Westwood Baseball Association believes that the analysis of whether metal bats are inherently dangerous should be guided by facts rather than speculation.

Initially, we must understand that there is risk of injury in playing baseball, as there is in participating in other sports and recreational activities. The risks are not limited to injury from batted balls, but also include dangers associated with running, jumping, sliding, fielding and batting. Both thrown and batted balls subject players, particularly younger children, to various risks of injury, and all parents must understand these risks and determine for themselves whether or not they wish to permit their children to engage in organized baseball activities, notwithstanding these risks. The Westwood Baseball Association will offer refunds to any family that has already registered a child or children, but now decides that they do not want to expose their children to the inherent risks of playing baseball.

With respect to the specific issue regarding the use of metal bats in baseball youth leagues, the Westwood Baseball Association is a chartered member of Little League Baseball, and our position regarding the use of metal bats parallels that of the national organization. Westwood Baseball is committed to enhancing and maximizing the safety of our children while participating in the national pastime. It is helpful, therefore, to examine studies which have been conducted regarding the relative safety of metal and wooden bats for use by youth leagues.

The National Consumer Product Safety Commission studied this issue, and concluded in 2002 that there is no evidence to suggest aluminum bats pose any greater risk than wood bats. As detailed on the Little League website (www.littleleague.org/media/USA_Youth_Baseball_012507.asp), multiple amateur governing bodies for baseball leagues at varying levels of competition, including the NCAA, National High School Federation, Little League International, and PONY have all concluded that aluminum bats do not pose any substantial enhanced risk to the safety of children than do wooden bats. Since 2003, all bats are required to meet a "Bat Exit Speed Ratio" (BESR) performance limitation, which ensures that contact between aluminum bats and baseballs does not result in balls being hit any harder than with the best wooden bats.

Additionally, a study by the National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury reveals only fifteen (15) catastrophic batted ball injuries to pitchers, out of more than 9.5 million high school and college baseball players since 1982. Also, two out of three documented deaths resulting from batted balls in the past decade were caused by balls hit with wooden bats rather than aluminum. One study, conducted by Dr. Frederick Mueller, Director of the National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury Research, indicates that catastrophic injuries resulting from balls struck by wooden bats may in fact be more frequent than those arising from the use of aluminum bats. It is, of course, undisputed that wooden bats often break, which can result in sharp, splintered shards of wood flying off the bat in various directions, clearly creating a risk of substantial and catastrophic injury not present with metal bats.



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Therefore, after reviewing the available literature regarding this issue, the Westwood Baseball Association does not find any compelling evidence that the use of aluminum or other metal bats, particularly in youth leagues involving to the youngest players, poses any enhanced safety risk as compared with the use of wooden bats. However, in an effort to enhance the safety of all players, coaches, umpires, spectators and others involved in the activities of the Westwood Baseball Association, we do strongly recommend the town of Westwood purchase and install portable defibrillators at their Brookside, Westvale and Meadowbrook fields. Having defibrillators readily available at each of these facilities will not only greatly reduce the risks of serious injury as a result of being struck by a thrown or batted ball, but also will provide potentially life saving aid to anyone who suffers from severe cardiac symptoms while participating in or attending games and practices of the Westwood Baseball Association.
