

ASAP news



Continuing the Little League tradition of making it "safer for the kids."

Safety Plans Taking Wing

It's too soon to say exactly how many new leagues will submit safety plans for the coming year, but the numbers are promising.

With just a few days to the May 1st deadline, already 18 percent of the plans submitted have been from leagues who did not submit a safety plan last year. That's a lot of children being covered by an active safety officer and caring board of directors.

As of April 29th, 1,981 leagues had submitted their safety plans for review, and 360 of those are first-time plans. Since there is always a big rush of plans just at the deadline of being postmarked by May 1st, there could be many more hundreds still coming.

In 2002, over 2,700 total plans were submitted, for 42 percent of the country operating under a safety plan. What will the total be in 2003, and will your league be taking part of the benefits of safety?

Double the Pace of 2002

As a benchmark, last year at this time, Little League International Headquarters had received just under 1,000 safety plans, so the pace is about double what it was last year. The earlier District incentive deadline of April 1st contributed, as over 1,500 safety plans had been submitted by early April, as opposed to 244 plans a year ago at the same time. And of those, over 240 were new safety plans from first time leagues.

To check your plan's status, go to <http://www.littleleague.org/plans.asp> and check your

District's plans. Fill in your two-letter state code (AL, OH, etc.) and two digit District number (03, 08, 11, etc.), to see when your plan has been received and if it's approved.

If you've just submitted your safety plan, don't worry that it hasn't been reviewed. With several hundred safety plans to go through, Little League staff are working as hard as ever to document each plan's requirements so full credit can be given for those earning it.

20% CNA Accident Insurance Credit

However, if your league's safety plan was not approved, if you are prompt you still may follow up with the missing documentation of whatever point(s) you missed, or the staff reviewing missed in your plan, to earn the full 20 percent CNA/Little League player accident insurance premium credit. In other words, for every dollar you paid to Little League for your team player accident insurance, you will be earn 20 cents back to your LLB account by having your plan approved. The credits are usually posted to accounts in July or August. Check your Little League Statement then.

WHY IT MATTERS

Did you know that your participation in safety awareness is making a difference in the lives of the children in your league? And that all leagues completing safety plans are greatly impacting the safety and health of the participants and volunteers in leagues across the country?

That's right, since *A Safety Awareness Program* was begun in 1995, the number of injuries in Little League has dropped from a static average of 5,695 per year (1990-'95), to 2,390 injuries in the five year period since it started (1996-2000). That's a **58 percent reduction** in injuries to children and volunteers.

In the last three years, Little League has reached a low of 1,556 injuries per year (2000-02) or a **72 percent drop** since the program began. That's phenomenal! And that's with just 42 percent of leagues participating last year. What will it be this year?

If you haven't completed a safety plan for your league, why not do it now, and get a jump on next year? The steps you take now may prevent an avoidable injury from happening yet this year. But it's up to you to care enough to start.

Together, ASAP and you *can* make a difference!



Who Uses Spit Tobacco?



No One in Your Little League Program

... Right?

become regular spit tobacco consumers. It's NSTEP's goal to change this.

Little League Baseball, International is a major player on the NSTEP team because it wants kids to know the truth about spit tobacco. Together, NSTEP and Little League are working to ensure that kids, spit tobacco, baseball and softball never mix. NSTEP also has partnered with Major League Baseball, the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA), the Professional Baseball Athletic Trainers Society (PBATS), and the American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA). Spokesmen have included some of baseball's most exciting figures, including Derek Jeter, Hank Aaron, Jeff Bagwell, Lenny Dykstra, and NSTEP national chairman, Joe Garagiola. Chances are NSTEP will make an impression at your child's Little League ballpark this summer through its programs, projects, and literature aimed at teaching young baseball and softball fans that spit tobacco isn't part of the game.

So ask yourself again – who uses spit tobacco? It could be your kid, but it doesn't have to be. NSTEP needs the help of parents, coaches, and adult role models everywhere to help bring its anti-spit tobacco message to today's youth.

Visit WWW.NSTEP.ORG today for vital resources and information on spit tobacco, cessation, and oral cancer prevention.

Think again. In fact, the national spit tobacco rate among high school males is one in five. That's right – one out of every five high-school boys has used spit tobacco, a substance that contains more than 28 known cancer-causing agents. Girls aren't immune, either. Some regions of the U.S. report that girls are using spit tobacco at high rates as well. One thing is clear – kids are using spit tobacco. What are you doing to make sure that your child isn't?

NSTEP wants to make sure your child doesn't use spit tobacco, too. Oral Health America's National Spit Tobacco Education Program (NSTEP) was founded in 1994 as an effort to increase awareness about the dangers of spit tobacco, and break the historical link between this potentially deadly drug and America's pastime. NSTEP's mission is to prevent the use of spit tobacco, and to help all users quit.

NSTEP's mission isn't easy. The spit tobacco industry enjoys more than \$2 billion in yearly sales, largely by targeting new users. Nearly one million children will try spit tobacco this year and more than 300,000 of these young first-time users will



ORAL HEALTH AMERICA
410 North Michigan Ave.
Suite 352
Chicago, IL 60644-4211
312-836-9900
www.NSTEP.org

Machine Pitch Leagues

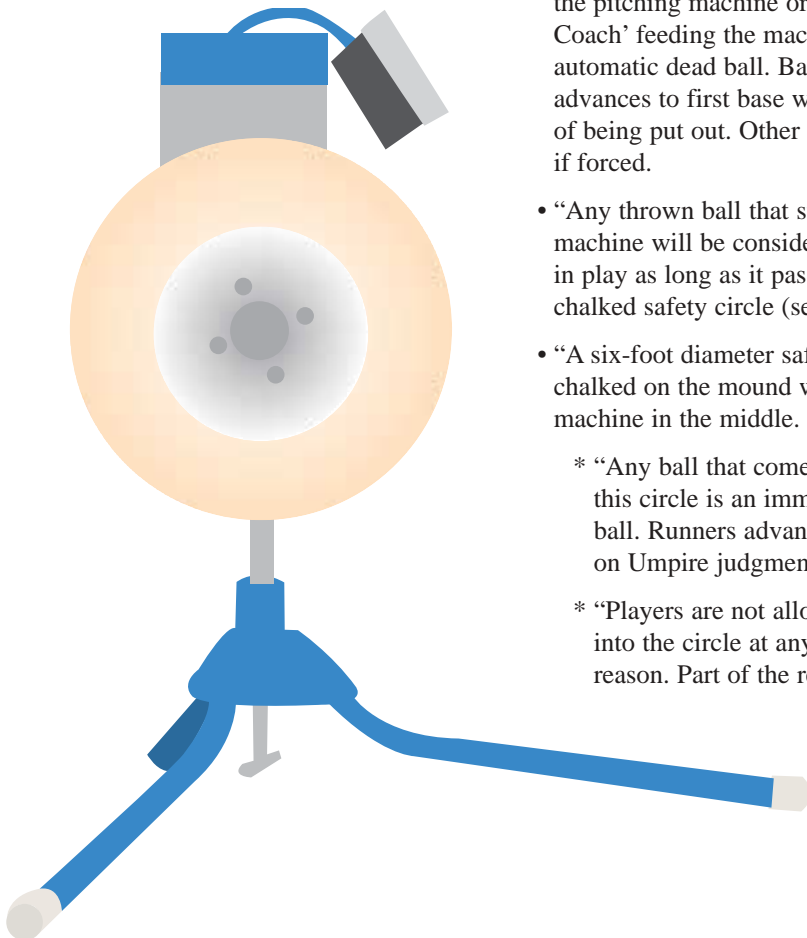
Here are responses from our readers on the question on Machine Pitch League safety posed in the January-February issue. Thanks for the ideas.

Use Underground Trenches

“We dug a trench from the dugouts to behind the mound and ran PVC pipe in it. During the season we pulled an extension cord through it and plugged the machine in.

“The PVC pipe has a threaded cap which is below ground when we are not using the pitching machine. As an aside, we made the pipe big enough that we can pull a hose through to water down the field if we feel the need to during all day play on Saturday. Keeps the lines and field dragged since we have all clay infields.”

Chuck Anderson
Western Branch Little League
VA D6, Chesapeake



Set Up Overall Rules for League

“Our District Leagues have used machine pitch for several years, and we even have ‘District Special Tournaments’ at the end of the season for 7-year-old Machine Pitch and 8-year-old Machine Pitch. Here are some of the rules and safety recommendations that we utilize for these games:

- “All of our leagues have had underground power lines professionally installed on the fields that they use for machine pitch. The outlet is below ground, with a safety cover and proper drainage. The system is checked by a professional electrician for ongoing safety (proper grounding, etc.) on an ongoing basis (usually at least twice per year and as part of the Little League lighting audit).
- “All of our Leagues use only ‘single wheel’ machines, as ‘double wheel’ machines can easily throw curve balls and are less accurate if the wheel/ball becomes damp or dirty.
- “Any batted ball that directly strikes the pitching machine or the ‘Umpire/Coach’ feeding the machine is an automatic dead ball. Batter/runner advances to first base without liability of being put out. Other runners advance if forced.
- “Any thrown ball that strikes the machine will be considered ‘live’ and in play as long as it passes beyond the chalked safety circle (see next item).
- “A six-foot diameter safety circle is chalked on the mound with the machine in the middle.
 - * “Any ball that comes to rest within this circle is an immediate dead ball. Runners advance depending on Umpire judgment.
 - * “Players are not allowed to travel into the circle at any time for any reason. Part of the responsibility of

the ‘Umpire/Coach’ feeding the machine is to prevent any player from accidentally entering this circle.

- “Pitching plates are placed on either side of the circle. The player in the position of ‘pitcher’ must be in contact with one of these pitching plates before the ball is fed into the machine.
- “It is recommended that any player in the ‘Pitcher Position’ wear a batting helmet while in the field to protect against any accidental contact with the machine.

“Hope this information helps.”

Ben Hunt
District Safety Officer
Texas District 28

Use GFCI Receptacles for Power

“In reference to your question: There are two leagues in my district that direct-buried the electrical cable in conduit and then came up behind the pitchers mound into an underground box to plug in. Please remember to use a GFCI ‘Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter’ receptacle or circuit breaker in providing power. This will help to prevent electrical shock.”

Lee Joyce
District Safety Officer
Virginia District 7

Inspect Equipment Regularly

“I read the issue about pitching machines. We use only Little League-approved machines. All machines are annually inspected for frayed wiring, etc. All electrical cords must be rated to handle the electrical load. These are also tested and inspected. Some of our fields have no electrical power available and we allow generators. These are also inspected. All pitching machines plugged into 120V AC must be ground fault protected, whether from a generator or pole power.”

Chuck Koslosky
North King County Little League
Seattle, WA, District 8

Accidents Can Be Avoided

“... All catchers must wear a mask, ‘dangling’ type throat protector and catcher’s helmet during infield/outfield practice, pitcher warm-up and games....”

Rule 1.17

This post originally went out on a Little League umpire email list, and was then sent on to the Little League safety officer email list run out of District 7, Virginia. A player was injured when he was hit by a thrown ball while not wearing his catcher’s helmet during infield practice. It is a reminder of why we are involved in Little League safety and why it is so important to enforce the rules.

Here is the post:

“... All catchers must wear a mask, ‘dangling’ type throat protector and catcher’s helmet during infield/outfield practice, pitcher warm-up and games....’ (Rule 1.17)

“How many of us enforce the requirement that the catcher’s helmet be worn during pre-game infield practice? I know that, in the past, I have not always been diligent about this one. We have a tragic situation unfolding in our district

that’s essentially a direct result of a failure to follow that kind of safety measure. It happened during a practice, not a game, but one can easily see how it could happen during pre-game as well.

“According to the information I have, Austin’s coach was hitting balls to the infield, and Austin was catching the return throws, not wearing his helmet. The coach hit a ball to the third baseman, who missed it, and the ball went through into the outfield.

“Rather than wait for that ball to be retrieved, the coach simply hit another ball to the third baseman which he fielded and threw to first base. By this time a teammate had shagged the original ball and both balls were thrown in at the same time. Austin caught one, but the other one hit him in the temple. At the time he appeared OK, and he completed practice, but later at home he got sick and started to vomit. He was taken to the Emergency Room, and then airlifted to All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg. Somewhere in the process, Austin lost consciousness.

“It’s been three weeks since this happened, and Austin still hasn’t awakened. There is bruising on his brain, but he is reportedly now off the ventilator and breathing on his own. Beyond that, his prognosis – how long until he will awaken, whether he will awaken at all, and what his condition will be if he does – is all unknown. Needless to say, the teammate who threw the ball is devastated as well.

“I quote Larry Taylor, a fellow district umpire who has been following the situation closely and reporting back to us:



d and You'll Be Thankful

'As a Little League umpire, this is THE reason that we must always be very diligent about the rules, as they are in place to help prevent 'accidents' from occurring. This was truly an avoidable situation, but sometimes coaches and players think we get too strict and need to lighten up. I had a coach question why there REALLY had to be an adult inside the dugout last night; (just) last week I saw a kid just miss getting hit in the head with a bat by another kid swinging it inside the dugout. This incident is really putting a damper on the season in Port Charlotte and is on everyone's minds (I even had one mom require her kid to wear a batting helmet the whole time he was at baseball, even in the dugout). I just wanted to pass this along so we would understand how important it is for us to do our part in the safety of these kids.'

"I couldn't have said it better myself. Think about Austin the next time you're tempted to let a 'picky' safety rule go un-enforced."

Kevin Hunter
District Umpire Consultant
Florida District 9

"In February there was an email distributed to all individuals on the Safety Officers Distribution List on a situation that took place with an player from Florida. Below you will find an update to this individual's condition. It is extremely unfortunate that this accident took place being that this could have been prevented so easily. As a result, all of us can definitely learn from this so that an incident of this nature will not happen again.

"Our prayers are with him for a 100 percent full recovery."

Lee Joyce
District Safety Officer
Virginia District 7

"I will pass along this note from Kevin Hunter, who originally informed me of the Austin incident:

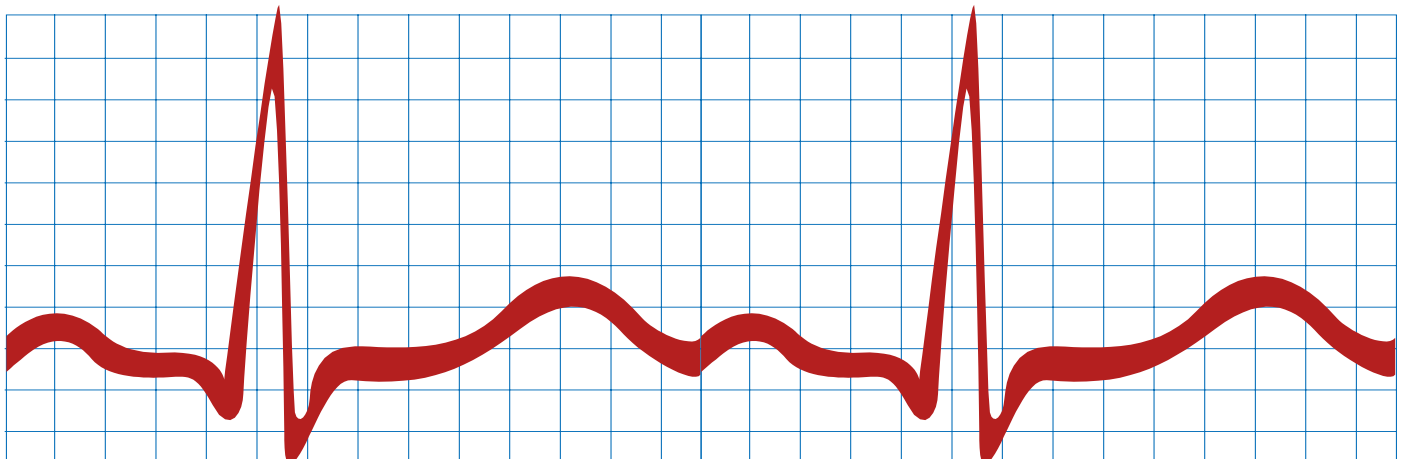
'Today I received an update on Austin from one of our District umpires. For those of you who don't recall, or missed the original posts, Austin was catching infield practice balls without a catcher's helmet at the end of January, was struck in

the temple by a thrown ball, and fell into a coma as a result.

'According to Austin's mother, Austin is now 'officially' listed as being out of the coma. It's apparently more complicated and 'gray' than I had understood, but on a 'levels of consciousness' rating, Austin is now up to somewhere between 4 and 5 out of 8. Although he cannot yet talk, he can read and understand simple words, interacts with other people, is able to brush his own hair and teeth and do other simple tasks like that. His right side is still considerably weaker than his left, but he is showing steady improvement and the therapists are apparently very encouraged.

'No one knows how fully he will recover, but at least he's solidly on the road back, for which I'm sure we're all thankful.'"

Clay Berry
District Administrator
California District 33



Following Rules = Safety

The following are responses about Austin's injury and the need to ensure that all rules are being enforced for the safety of all players, through education.

Catchers Can't Fold Up Flap

"I am in full agreement with enforcing all Little League rules especially the ones concerning safety. I try to politely inform the coach/manager when I see something prior to the game being officially in my hands. However, it is disheartening because you see the same people doing the same dumb things time after time.

"Also, while we are on the safety subject, how many of you have noticed male catchers intentionally folding the hanging flap of the chest protector before the inning starts. I have told some again and again that the flap must be down. With one individual it came to a point that I told him and his coach that if he left the dugout one more time with the flap folded under the chest protector he was gone! The last thing I want to do is eject another from a ball game.

"It does seem we are doomed to be the 'bad guys.' However, I'd rather be the bad guy than see some youngster writhing in pain because no one spoke up."

Bob Bourassa,
District 9 Umpire

Adults Are Responsible for Safety

"The umpire's jurisdiction begins when they enter the field. Failure to have the catcher don proper equipment surely could mean HIS removal from the playing area — FOR HIS OWN SAFETY — as well as a warning to the coach to comply with Little League rules or face ejection. Ejecting the player is a bit harsh — kids often have no sense of their own mortality — but the adult should know better. And why are the other parents putting up with this blatant disregard for their children's safety? The responsibility for the players' well-being extends in many directions."

The Umpyre, via email

One Manager, Two Coaches Only

"I see this every year during All-Star tournaments. If I'm in charge as the tournament director, I let the umpire know about the dangling throat guard and the flap on the chest protector. If they didn't bring the proper equipment and they are at my field I provide them the proper equipment..."

"While we are on safety, how about an All-Star team that comes to your field with six coaches on the field before the game and a 6-year-old who they say can sit in the dugout? You tell them one manager and two coaches; they then try to have a fourth coach who sits in the dugout keeping score. One manager and two coaches on field or in dugout only, and only players on fields, not younger brothers or sisters. When we play at their field it's kind of hard to tell them to get off the field, but I let the umps know..."

Submitted via email

Have Backing of Board of Directors

"Our league is pretty good about only having one manager, two coaches and only players in the dugout or on the field. I only had to tell a coach once that his younger child is not allowed in the dugout. I haven't had any problems since then, thank God (knock on wood). However, I can understand your frustration. I also post a sign at the entrance of the dugout and inside the dugout to remind everyone of the rule.

"Ultimately, it helps to have the backing of all the Little League board members, backing from the district, and backing from the insurance company. Also, depending on how much you want to say to such offenders, and how far you want to go to show your concern, you can always put your concerns in writing to the offenders and cc: the board members, district, and the insurance company. I believe that would get their attention. And, if you really decide to follow up with actually sending a copy to who you copied, and since it is in writing, no one could ignore the offenses, and they would have to do something about it.

It always makes a difference when you put something in writing. Trust me. You might get some people mad at you. But, what is more important, the safety of the children or...? Also, remember, when you decided to be a board member or take on a position for the league, you have also decided to take on responsibilities that you can't ignore. Let's just say (for example) that a child gets injured who was practicing in the gym with the all-stars (and they were not supposed to be there). The parents start filing suit against anyone and everyone (including you). How can you explain to the Judge and the jury that you decided to turn your head just because everyone else did?...

"As long as you do the best you can do in reporting deliberate offenses, you will be in the clear. But, if you decided to ignore those offenses (along with everyone else), you may be liable for more than you bargained for. As far as the law goes, ignorance is not an excuse."

Linda Orozco

Tri-Cities Little League, Rocklin, Calif.

Umpires Are League Officials, Too

"I think it is sad when adults do not want to take responsibility. Safety issues should be enforced both on and off the field. The rule book states an umpire is a representative of the league and of Little League Baseball. Therefore the umpire is a league official and should take the steps necessary to ensure that all follow the rules and adhere to safety.... In Little League you are dealing with volunteers who may or may not know all the rules. Therefore, it is imperative that everyone assume responsibility and take steps to ensure the kids are safe."

Stephen Wos

Virginia District 7 Umpire-in-Chief



You've Got Questions

We've Got Answers

"Our Little League has no fields with pitching mounds at 46' for our majors teams. They use softball fields which are flat and here in Washington the fields are usually wet and muddy. The kids dig holes at the rubber and end up throwing up hill. Little League Baseball Incorporated has approved the use of portable pitching mounds for game play. Has ASAP addressed this issue?"

ASMI has recommended kids need to be pitching from a mound; do you agree? See email (in green) below."

Scott Hite
Little League coach

"Dr. Whiteside asked me if I could share with you our professional knowledge on mound vs. flat ground pitching.

"At the American Sports Medicine Institute we have conducted numerous studies on baseball pitching biomechanics. While we have not looked at children pitching from flat ground, we have compared children vs. adult mound pitching as well as adult pitchers throwing from a mound and flat ground. Based upon our biomechanical and epidemiological studies, we believe that baseball pitchers are at risk for overuse pitching injuries. Most of these injuries manifest in mature pitchers (collegiate and professional), although many younger pitchers show early warning signs of developing overuse injuries — such as unusual elbow or shoulder pain. Key factors that may contribute to overuse pitching injuries are poor mechanics, excessive number of pitches thrown in competition (per game, per season, and per year), and improper physical conditioning. Successful youth level pitchers use mechanics similar to successful adult pitchers, but with drastically less force.

"Thus, our recommendations are to learn proper pitching mechanics as early as possible and focus on physical conditioning more as the athlete's body ages and develops. While mechanics of adult pitchers when throwing from flat ground have been shown to be similar to pitching from a mound, there are some significant differences. Thus, the American Sports Medicine Institute recommends that pitchers of all levels pitch from a mound instead of flat ground. The mound height for youth baseball can be proportionally lower than for adult size baseball. Furthermore, the number of pitches thrown in competition should be monitored and controlled for youth baseball pitchers, like it is for older pitchers. Breaking pitches should be discouraged until the pitcher's bones have almost finished growing (i.e. puberty). There should be special caution for pitchers who play in multiple leagues or year-round (warm weather locations). These guidelines may help prevent early signs of overuse in youth pitchers as well as serious injuries at older ages."

Glenn S. Fleisig,
Ph.D., Smith & Nephew Chair of Research
American Sports Medicine Institute

A Yes, ASAP and Little League Baseball, Incorporated believe baseball should be pitched from a rise, rather than flat ground for proper mechanics and to reduce potential injuries to a pitcher's arm. Little League has put their recommendations into the Official Playing Rules and Regulations. In Diagram No. 2 (page 40), you will note the official field dimensions include a six-inch rise to the pitching rubber from the height of the field at the plate.

C "My question is concerning dangles on the catcher's mask. Are we still required to use these dangles if we use the new mask with the drop-down protector? Looking at your safety brochure that just came out, you're still showing the dangle. We need a clarification on the dangle as opposed to the new style mask with the two inch, drop-down mask. Are (dangles) still required?"

Buddie Hendricks
Martin S. Evans LL

A Yes, dangles are required on ALL catcher's masks, no matter what style. While the newer, goalie-style catcher's masks provide a couple of additional inches of protection for the throat and neck area while the catcher is looking straight ahead or down, the dangle is there to protect the catcher's vulnerable throat even if their head is tilted back – to watch the flight of a pop-up or foul-tip, or just a flinch away from an on-coming ball. Without the dangle, as soon as the mask rises high enough that the throat is exposed, just a few degrees of tilt, the player is vulnerable to getting hit with a ball or bat with no protection. Some of the new masks have a pre-drilled hole for this purpose. Of those that do not have a hole, many have a dimple showing where a hole can be drilled without compromising the mask's protective capabilities so a dangle can be attached.

Have a question or tip to share?

Call the ASAP Hotline:

800-811-7443

or email: asap@musco.com

or write to us at:

ASAP
100 1st Ave. West
Oskaloosa, IA 52577

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Newspaper Reminders

“When I have had an incident that could have been prevented, I ask my local paper to put a small article in the newspaper under the title Little League Reminder and state the cause of the incident and whatever remedy would have prevented it. Not only the coaches and managers read it, but so do the players and parents. It helps get the message across and hopefully keep the same thing from happening again.”

Wm. C. Stewart
District & League Safety Officer
Michigan-Wisconsin Little League
Michigan District 10

Local Rule for Pitchers' 'Off Days'

“As we are all aware even the best pitcher has an ‘off day’ on the mound so to protect our players our league has had the following rule in effect for years. We believe this rule has prevented needless injuries. ‘Any pitcher who hits 3 (three) batters in one inning or 5 (five) batters in one game must be removed from the mound for the remainder of that game.’”

Ray Harris
Safety Officer
East Boston, Mass., National Little League
Massachusetts District 12

