



Wilmington Blue Rocks minor league baseball team playing the Lynchburg Hillcats at Fraley Field in Wilmington.
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FOUL BALL SAFETY NOW MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL NETTING REPORT

APRIL 2021



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Background & Methodology	4
Statement by Jordan Skopp	5
Findings	6
Players Voice Concerns	10
Study Conclusion	11

Introduction

FoulBallSafetyNow.com conducted a study in April through telephone calls to minor league baseball box offices to examine the current state of safety netting at nearly one hundred minor league ballparks. Our findings compel these conclusions:

- **Dire conditions remain with 42 minor league teams playing in ballparks throughout the country that have no netting past dugouts and fans remain at serious risk of being severely injured by high-speed line-drive foul balls.**
- Children are especially vulnerable to serious injury, and should not be allowed to attend minor league games at these ballparks until the threat to their safety is fully eliminated.
- There is at least one team, the Peoria Chiefs that will continue to host games this year with no netting above the dugouts.
- Minor league teams are affiliates of MLB teams. MLB's continued lack of respect for fan safety clearly indicates the need for an independent review outside of professional baseball's influence. Congress, state lawmakers, and state and federal agencies should take action to address and correct this ongoing disregard for fan safety. Until then, no children should attend any games at these ballparks.

Minor League Report highlights include:

- A Warning from Foul Ball Safety Now Founder Jordan Skopp
- Identification of each individual team continuing to play with no netting past dugouts.
- Powerful statements from minor league players themselves who won't let their families sit in unprotected seats

Background

The Minor League Baseball season begins May 4th.

Minor League Baseball, just like MLB, continues to put fans' lives at risk from dangerous high-speed foul balls at ballparks throughout the country. This issue has gained some attention in the context of MLB, mostly due to recent high-profile fan maimings, including two infants, and the death of Dodger fan Linda Goldbloom in 2018 from a foul ball injury. The problem has not been solved in the Major Leagues, and today the threat to fans remains even greater in minor league ballparks.

The minor league gates opening to fans is not any different than a traveling carnival operating a ride without a license or a permit, or an unfenced pool directly next to a playground.

In 2019, when a regular 26.5 week MLB season was played, [at least 15 fans were maimed by foul balls in MLB parks alone](#). The minor leagues played more than three times as many games that year. Therefore, there's a real possibility that at least 40 fans were seriously injured by foul balls during the minor league season.

Foul Ball Safety Now has discovered at least 43 children have been seriously injured by foul balls throughout professional baseball since 2008. Many of these children were hit in the head and some continue to suffer from life-altering impacts. Most of these injuries were accounted for in the MLB stadiums, but again many more games are played throughout the minor leagues, where press coverage, and netting, is sorely lacking, so this number is not comprehensive.

Methodology

This research involved phone inquiries to minor league box offices in the Spring of 2021.

Statement by Jordan Skopp

The following statement is from Jordan Skopp, founder of Foul Ball Safety Now.

The state of the union is horrible throughout Minor League Baseball. It is so severe that I am calling for no children to be allowed into any of these ballparks until the government intervenes to ensure their safety. Minor League Baseball must be closed for business, at least to children, until further notice. Fans deserve a gold standard of protection, and unfortunately there is no standard, as Jeff Passan of ESPN [suggested](#) in 2019 shortly after an infant was struck in the head.

There is one simple reason why the crisis of fan maimings from foul balls continues throughout professional baseball. Major League Baseball, a \$50 Billion industry, simply doesn't care about the lives of their fans, particularly those who attend minor league games. MLB is looking to continue producing a dangerous product at the expense and the welfare of the fans.

Unfortunately, unsuspecting fans keep coming back to these dangerous facilities, not realizing a foul ball injury could happen to them. They're having good times under false pretenses — a recipe for disaster that needs to end. There's not enough protection between fans' heads and 100MPH foul balls.

As we know from a [recent incident](#) at Spring Training in Arizona when a beer can exploded after being struck by a high-speed foul ball, the threat to fan safety continues. That beer can could have been a child's head.

Any buildings department would condemn a ballpark if this were a brick falling from the building and such unsafe conditions were known to persist. At the rate the bricks are falling on fans in the form of high-speed foul balls, the whole baseball industry ought to be under investigation and forced to shut down their operations until independent safety experts are brought in to solve this, with government oversight.

The madness needs to stop. This is not alarmist. The national pastime can't continue to endanger fans' lives.

Foul Ball Safety Now and a growing number of foul ball injury victims are trying to convey these facts so that this doesn't happen to other families.

During the 2020 season when fans were not allowed into the stadiums due to COVID-19, MLB filled some of the seats with cardboard cutouts, and even collected fans' money for putting their custom cutouts in the stands. When any of the cutouts was struck by a foul ball, the fan would receive the ball and the damaged cutout. Victims of actual foul ball injury found this PR stunt incredibly insensitive and offensive. Fans' lives are not cardboard cutouts.

In essence, baseball is trying to keep up the myth that this is somehow good humor. And the media seems all too eager to join them with fluff stories about exploding beer cans and mangled cardboard cutouts. This is bad humor, it's distasteful, and it's wrong. The ongoing scandal of foul ball fan injuries needs to be stopped.

Why wait for the next predictable and preventable headline about a fan being killed or severely injured? What can happen now is executive action from a governor or state agency, or state legislation requiring emergency response and intervention to properly equip all minor league ballparks with appropriate netting.

The U.S. Congress and federal agencies must intervene with investigations and legislation to hold MLB accountable and to regulate safety protocols for all professional baseball facilities to ensure fans are protected from dangerous foul balls.

I intend to continue putting pressure on MLB, and have plans to take increasingly bold steps, whatever it takes to galvanize political action and fix this problem. For example, I plan to begin alerting corporate sponsors of stadiums and ballparks that their brands are at risk if they continue to sponsor the ongoing fan injury crisis. Whatever it takes, I believe the Baseball Maiming Society must stop. We need Foul Ball Safety Now!

Minor League Findings 2021

The following 42 teams continue to play with no netting past dugouts:

MiLB Teams

Affiliate MLB Team

Omaha Storm Chasers		Kansas City Royals
Scranton/Wilkes Barre RailRiders		New York Yankees
Memphis Redbirds		St Louis Cardinals
Nashville Sounds		Milwaukee Brewers
Las Vegas Aviators		Oakland Athletics
Round Rock Express		Texas Rangers
Altoona Curve		Pittsburgh Pirates
Biloxi Shuckers		Milwaukee Brewers
Binghamton Rumble Ponies		New York Mets
Bowie Baysox		Baltimore Orioles
Erie SeaWolves		Detroit Tigers
Frisco RoughRiders		Texas Rangers
Mississippi Braves		Atlanta Braves
Montgomery Biscuits		Tampa Bay Rays

MiLB Teams**Affiliate MLB Team**

New Hampshire Fisher Cats		Toronto Blue Jays
Rocket City Trash Pandas		LA Angels
San Antonio Missions		San Diego Padres
Tennessee Smokies		Chicago Cubs
Aberdeen IronBirds		Baltimore Orioles
Beloit Snappers		Miami Marlins
St Paul Saints		Minnesota Twins
Everett AquaSox		Seattle Mariners
Hillsboro Hops		Arizona Diamondbacks
Hudson Valley Renegades		New York Yankees
Lake County Captains		Cleveland Indians
Lansing Lugnuts		Oakland Athletics
South Bend Cubs		Chicago Cubs

MiLB Teams

Spokane Indians

Tri-City Dust Devils

Vancouver Canadians

West Michigan Whitecaps

Wisconsin Timber Rattlers

Augusta GreenJackets

Delmarva Shorebirds

Jupiter Hammerheads

Palm Beach Cardinals

Down East Wood Ducks

Asheville Tourists

Peoria Chiefs

Greenville Drive

Stockton Ports

Eugene Emeralds

Affiliate MLB Team

Colorado Rockies

LA Angels

Toronto Blue Jays

Detroit Tigers

Milwaukee Brewers

Atlanta Braves

Baltimore Orioles

Miami Marlins

St Louis Cardinals

Texas Rangers

Houston Astros

St. Louis Cardinals

Boston Redsoxs

Oakland Athletics

San Francisco Giants

Players Voice Concerns

- “I always told them they had to sit behind home plate. Never behind dugouts where there was no netting.” — **Minor League manager and former player Gary Jones** (The Morning Call, 2019)
- “It's just negligent to not have netting. And if that were my family, I'm suing whoever for whatever they've got. Because it's literally just common sense. Period.” — **Minor league pitcher** (2020 Interview with Jordan Skopp) “I remember, my mom came to a game and I wrote on the sheet, 'behind the net please'. But we were the visiting team so they didn't request it. I remember freaking out. I think I yelled at my mom. I was like, 'I don't care what you do, just move. I don't care where it is. Just don't sit there.' I mean, that would be literally the worst thing.”
- “People always say, well, you should be paying attention. But as a player, I know how hard it is to catch the line drive coming at you at 100 miles per hour. For a non-baseball player to be expected to do that is unrealistic. So extended netting has to happen.” — **Former minor league pitcher** (2020 Interview with Jordan Skopp)
- “I think back to my own playing career over a decade ago. And yeah, players were incredibly remorseful. I think if you talked to any player, almost every one of them would say that they would support extending the netting because there's just no reason not to, really. If you're sitting behind home plate you get used to having netting in front of you and you enjoy the ballgame. Same thing happens if you're seated down the line.” — **Former minor league pitcher** (2020 Interview with Jordan Skopp)
- “I've seen things happen that are really tough to watch as a ballplayer. Obviously, no ballplayer wants to see something like that. But thank goodness nothing has ever happened to me when I'm on the field, with a fan. The only place I've ever seen a foul ball hit a fan in a dangerous way was in the Northwoods League, a summer ball league, in 2017. It was scary. It was in Wisconsin Rapids. A foul ball hit the roof — a metal corrugated roof over the stands — and then bounced down and hit a young fan in the head. I don't believe there were serious injuries, but the fan was taken out of the ballpark. Play stopped. And that's terrifying to see as an athlete.” **Minor League pitcher** (2020 Interview with Jordan Skopp)

Study Conclusion

The threat to fan safety from dangerous foul balls remains severe, and professional baseball must be held accountable for safeguarding every facility, from MLB stadiums to Spring Training and Minor League ballparks across the country.

Congressional investigations and legislative action are needed to independently assess baseball's inadequate approach to fan safety, regulate protocols to install appropriate netting, and correct the leagues' ongoing and historical failures to protect fans from foul balls, and revoke the Baseball Rule legal liability shield.

MLB has failed us fans throughout the history of the game, and should have taken decisive action long ago, and at least since 1970 when 14-year-old Alan Fish was killed by a foul ball at Dodger Stadium. Instead, MLB has hidden behind the Baseball Rule, and only taken ineffective baby steps along the way to add more netting after high-profile maimings take place.

MLB is no different than Big Tobacco, and has concealed information about foul ball injuries and risky seating areas from the public, knowing that fans would continue to be maimed every year.

Baseball will continue to lose the respect of a growing number of fans as they realize it could have been them or their young families injured unnecessarily. The national epiphany of outrage has arrived.

Please report on this before more life-altering injuries occur. It's not if but when these unfortunate incidents will happen.

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Foul Ball Safety Now! is a campaign started by Jordan Skopp, a Brooklyn realtor, lifelong baseball fan, and author of a forthcoming book about the wildly overlooked scandal in the professional baseball industry – the all-too-frequent incidence of fans being maimed by dangerous foul balls due to the lack of extended protective netting, and related failures to educate fans about their assumed risk at the ballgame.

Learn more at <https://www.foulballsafetynow.com/>

