



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

MAY 2022



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# Introduction

FoulBallSafetyNow.com conducted this follow-up study in recent weeks, making telephone calls to minor league baseball box offices to examine the current status of safety netting at around one hundred minor league ballparks operating in the 2022 season. Our findings compel these conclusions:

- **Dangerous conditions persist in more than 40 minor league ballparks throughout the country that have no netting past the ends of the dugouts and fans remain at serious risk of being severely injured by high-speed line-drive foul balls.**
- Two teams continue to host games this year with at least some seating above the dugouts that remain exposed. Dozer Park in Peoria, IL still does not have any netting above the dugouts, and Nat Bailey Stadium in Vancouver, BC appears to have some suite seating areas above the dugouts that are not protected by netting.
- 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.
- Many minor league ballparks offer free admission to young children, as well as kids' playgrounds and picnic areas that are typically situated in outfield areas that are not protected by netting.
- 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 2022 Minor League Baseball season commenced on April 5, 2022, unaffected by the lockout that delayed the MLB season. During the first several weeks of the minor league season, FoulBallSafetyNow.com conducted a follow-up to our 2021 report by calling minor league box offices to inquire about the current status of protective netting.

Last year, FBSN discovered at least 42 minor league teams operating without netting past the end of the dugouts. While a few teams have since updated their netting, FBSN discovered additional teams that hadn't been factored into last year's analysis, leading to the new tally of 44 minor league teams operating under dangerous conditions in 2022.

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 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 still not been fully resolved in the Major Leagues, and today the threat to fans remains even greater in minor league ballparks.

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 2022.

# Statement by Jordan Skopp

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

The state of the union remains horrible throughout Minor League Baseball. It is so severe that I am repeating my 2021 demand that no children should 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.

Any buildings department would condemn a ballpark if these were bricks 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 shutter 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. 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.

FoulBallSafetyNow.com intends 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. We need Foul Ball Safety Now!

# Minor League Findings 2022

The following 44 teams continue to play with no netting past dugouts

<b>MiLB Teams</b>	<b>Affiliate MLB Team</b>
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
Biloxi Shuckers	Milwaukee Brewers
Binghamton Rumble Ponies	New York Mets
Bowie Baysox	Baltimore Orioles
Erie Seawolves	Detroit Tigers
Frisco RoughRiders	Texas Rangers
Montgomery Biscuits	Tampa Bay Rays
Harrisburg Senators	Washington Nationals
New Hampshire Fisher Cats	Toronto Blue Jays

### **MiLB Teams**

**San Antonio Missions**

**Tennessee Smokies**

**Aberdeen Ironbirds**

**St Paul Saints**

**Everett Aquasox**

**Hillsboro Hops**

**Hudson Valley Renegades**

**Lake County Captains**

**Lansing Lugnuts**

**South Bend Cubs**

**Spokane Indians**

**Tri-City Dust Devils**

**Vancouver Canadians**

### **Affiliate MLB Team**

San Diego Padres

Chicago Cubs

Baltimore Orioles

Minnesota Twins

Seattle Mariners

Arizona Diamondbacks

New York Yankees

Cleveland Indians

Oakland Athletics

Chicago Cubs

Colorado Rockies

LA Angels

Toronto Blue Jays



### **MiLB Teams**

**West Michigan Whitecaps**

**Wisconsin Timber Rattlers**

**Augusta GreenJackets**

**Delmarva Shorebirds**

**Down East Wood Ducks**

**Asheville Tourists**

**Peoria Chiefs**

**Stockton Ports**

**Eugene Emeralds**

**Charleston RiverDogs**

**Fayetteville Woodpeckers**

**Bowling Green Hot Rods**

**Cedar Rapids Kernals**

### **Affiliate MLB Team**

Detroit Tigers

Milwaukee Brewers

Atlanta Braves

Baltimore Orioles

Texas Rangers

Houston Astros

St Louis Cardinals

Oakland Athletics

San Francisco Giants

Tampa Bay Rays

Houston Astros

Tampa Bay Rays

Minnesota Twins

### **MiLB Teams**

**Rome Braves**

**Norfolk Tides**

**Great Lake Loons**

**Modesto Nuts**

**Hudson Valley Renegades**

### **Affiliate MLB Team**

Atlanta Braves

Baltimore Orioles

Los Angeles Dodgers

Seattle Mariners

New York Yankees

# 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.

**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.



For more information, visit [FoulBallSafetyNow.com](https://FoulBallSafetyNow.com)

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