



Wilmington Blue Rocks minor league baseball team playing the Lynchburg Hillcats at Fraley Field in Wilmington. *Photo by [Michael Stokes](#) via Flickr CC 2.0*

FOUL BALL SAFETY NOW

MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL NETTING REPORT

APRIL 2023



Table of Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Background & Methodology | 4 |
| Statement by Jordan Skopp | 5 |
| Findings | 7 |
| Players Voice Concerns | 11 |
| Study Conclusion | 12 |

Introduction

FoulBallSafetyNow.com conducted its third annual study to examine the current status of safety netting at around one hundred minor league ballparks operating in the 2023 Professional Development League (PDL) season. Our findings compel these conclusions:

- **Dangerous conditions still persist in more than 40 minor league ballparks throughout the country** that have no netting past the ends of the dugouts where 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 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.
- Despite MLB's announcement this winter that "PDL Clubs are required to install netting from foul pole to foul pole unless the configuration of the ballpark makes such coverage unnecessary," this new requirement will not be enforced until at least 2025 Opening Day, and it is still not a mandate from the Commissioner of Baseball. MLB has not announced any funding to ensure the improvements are made in a timely manner.
- Minor league (PDL) 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 investigate 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 2023 Professional Development League (PDL) baseball season commenced on April 5, 2023, and Foul Ball Safety Now can confirm that fan safety remains a serious concern despite our ongoing advocacy campaign. FoulBallSafetyNow.com conducted a telephone survey of minor league box offices for the third year in a row to inquire about the current status of protective netting.

In 2021, FBSN discovered at least 42 minor league teams operating without netting past the end of the dugouts. Some of the ballparks were not responsive that year, but FBSN later discovered additional ballparks that hadn't been factored into our 2021 analysis. In 2022, we found that at least 43 minor league teams were operating under those dangerous conditions.

MLB's Professional Development League (formerly known as Minor League Baseball), 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 stadiums, mostly due to high-profile fan maimings, including two infants, and the death of Dodgers fan Linda Goldbloom in 2018 from a foul ball injury. The problem has still not been resolved in the Major Leagues, and today the threat to fans remains even greater in minor league ballparks.

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 each Spring for the last three years. In 2023, phone calls were made to the 43 ballparks identified as lacking netting past the ends of the dugouts in 2022. Representatives for all 43 facilities confirmed that none had extended the nets for the 2023 season.

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 professional baseball with regards to foul ball risks to fans' health and safety. The situation is so severe that I am repeating my prior demand that no children should be allowed into any of these ballparks until the government intervenes to ensure their safety. MLB's Professional Development League must be closed for business, at least to children, until further notice. Fans deserve a gold standard of protection, and unfortunately there is still 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 (PDL) 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 shut their operations until independent safety experts are brought in to solve this, with government oversight.

The madness needs to stop. 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.

Although MLB announced that all PDL clubs will be required to extend netting to the foul poles (depending on the configuration of each ballpark), MLB will not enforce this policy until at least Opening Day 2025, and even then it won't have been the result of a mandate from the Commissioner. This is just another delayed baby step, further kicking the can down the road. Why is it acceptable to anyone that at least two more seasons of dangerous baseball will be played before netting improvements are required and enforced? The installation of extended netting takes only a matter of days — not years. There is no excuse for further delay! Such an announcement from MLB suggests that the league possesses knowledge that it isn't fulfilling a duty of care to protect its fans from preventable injuries.

Why wait for 2025 – or even the next predictable and preventable headline about a fan being killed or severely injured by a foul ball? 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 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 2023

The following 43 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 |
| 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

Affiliate MLB Team

Atlanta Braves

Baltimore Orioles

Los Angeles Dodgers

Seattle Mariners

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 facilities and Minor League (PDL) ballparks across the country.

Congressional investigations and legislative action are urgently 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 again

***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://www.foulballsafetynow.com)

Contact: Jordan Skopp, 718-627-6767 info@foulballsafetynow.com