

**NICEVILLE/VALPARAISO
LITTLE LEAGUE**

2007 SAFETY MANUAL

NVLL Safety Program Introduction

Our 2007 Niceville/Valparaiso Little League season marks the ninth year of our Safety Program. Little League, Williamsport, Pennsylvania, guides the program. The purpose of the program is to heighten safety awareness. We will train our managers and/or coaches in proper first aid. Player and parents will also be actively involved in the league safety training and prevention program. With proper training and increased awareness, the league hopes to prevent injuries from occurring. With all of us working together, our players will be safer. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Brad Schneider
Safety Officer
acsys@aol.com
(850) 259-3553

Niceville/Valparaiso Little League Safety Code

Our #1 goal is accident prevention!

- Responsibility for safety procedures should be that of an adult member of the local league.(League Safety Officer)
- Make arrangements for emergency medical services before all games and practices.
- Train managers, coaches, and umpires in first-aid. First aid kit will be available at all fields. Each team will be issued a smaller first aid kit as well.
- No games or practices should be held when weather or field conditions are not good, particularly when field lighting is inadequate.
- Play area should be inspected frequently for holes, damage, glass and other foreign objects.
- Only players, managers, coaches, and umpires are permitted on the playing field during play and practice sessions.
- Responsibility for keeping bats and loose equipment off the field of play should be that of a regular player (or a coach), whose team is currently playing, assigned for this purpose.(registered players only...no “bat boys or girls”)
- All players should be alert and watch the batter every pitch during practice and games.
- Inspect equipment regularly and make sure it fits properly.
- Catcher must wear catcher’s helmet, mask, throat protector, shin guards, long model chest protector and protective supporter (boys) at all times (exception – see next item).
- Catcher must wear catcher’s helmet and mask with throat protector and protective supporter (boys) when warming up pitchers.
- Players must not wear watches, rings, pins, jewelry, or other metallic items.
- “Horse play” is not permitted on the playing field at any time.

Niceville/Valparaiso Little League Emergency Safety Procedures

**BE SURE TO HAVE ALL YOUR ORIGINAL MEDICAL
RELEASE FORMS WITH TEAM AT ALL TIMES**

In case of medical emergency:

1. Give first aid and have someone call 911 immediately if an ambulance is necessary (i.e. severe injury, neck or head injury, not breathing – error on side of caution).
2. Notify parents immediately if they are not at scene.
3. Notify league safety officer by phone within 24 hours. (See page 9 of safety manual for phone numbers)
4. Fill out a Niceville/Valparaiso Little League Accident Report Form and deliver to Safety Officer mail box at Major League field within 24 hours. Copies of this form are included in this manual.
5. Talk to your team about the situation if it involves them. Often players are upset and worried when another player is injured. They need to feel safe and understand why the injury occurred.
6. Talk to any Niceville/Valparaiso Little League official you feel will be helpful (i.e. League Safety Officer, Player Agent, or League President).
7. Niceville/Valparaiso Little League insurance is supplemental to your own insurance policy. Claims must be filed with the help of the League Safety Officer.

Remember

Safety is everyone's job. Prevention is the key to reducing accidents. Report all hazardous conditions to Niceville/Valparaiso Little League Safety Officer or League President immediately. Don't play on a field that is not safe or with unsafe playing equipment. Be sure your players are fully equipped at all times, especially catchers and batters. Check your team's equipment often.

Umpires and Coaches Commitment to Safety

Before the Game **Umpires and Coaches meet at home plate**

- Introduce plate umpire, base umpire, managers, and coaches
- Receive official lineup cards for each team
- Discuss any local playing rules (time limit, playing boundaries, etc.)
- Discuss the strike zone
- Discuss sportsmanship by the players
- Discuss the innings pitched by a pitcher rule
- Clarify calling the game due to darkness or weather (rain, lighting, etc.)
- Inspect playing field for unsafe conditions
- Discuss legal pitching motions or balks
- Get two game balls from the concession stand
- Be sure players are not wearing any jewelry or metallic objects
- Be sure players are in full uniform – shirts tucked in and caps on
- Umpires inspect equipment for damage and to meet regulations
- Ensure games start promptly (on time). Note when game started

During the Game **Umpires and Coaches**

- Encourage coaches to help speed play by having catchers and players on the bench prepared and ready to take field with two outs
- Make sure catchers are wearing the proper equipment
- Encourage everyone to think Safety First
- Continue to monitor field for safety and playability
- Pitchers warming up in bull pen must have a catcher wearing helmet, mask, throat protector, and protective supporter (boys).
- Keep game moving – eight pitches or one minute to warm up the pitcher between innings
- Make the calls loud and clear, signaling each call properly
- Umpires should be in position to make the call.
- No arguing of any call made by the umpire, especially judgment calls
Managers are responsible for keeping their fans on their best behavior

Emergency

Field Phone Locations

<u>Park</u>	<u>Phone Location</u>	<u>Number</u>
Niceville Major League Field	Concession Stand	729-4073
Twin Oaks Complex	Concession Stand	729-4072
Valparaiso Minor-A Field	Concession Stand	678-3190

**IF POSSIBLE, MAKE SURE SOMEONE AT YOUR
PRACTICE/GAME HAS A CELLULAR PHONE**

Communicable Disease Procedures

While risk of one athlete infecting another with HIV/AIDS during competition is close to non-existent, there is a remote risk other blood borne infectious disease can be transmitted.

Procedures for reducing the potential for transmission of infectious agents should include, but not limited to the following:

1. Bleeding must be stopped, the open wound covered and if there is any excessive amount of blood on the uniform it must be changed before athlete may participate.
2. Routine use of gloves or other precautions to prevent skin and mucous membrane exposure when contact with blood or other body fluids is anticipated.
3. Immediately wash hands and other skin surfaces if contaminated (in contact) with blood or other body fluids. Wash hands immediately after removing gloves.
4. Clean all blood contaminated surfaces and equipment with a solution made from a proper dilution of household bleach (CDC recommends 1-100) or other disinfectant before competition resumes.
5. Practice proper disposal procedures to prevent injuries caused by needles, scalpels and other sharp instruments or devices.
6. Athletic trainer/coaches with bleeding or oozing skin should refrain from all direct athletic care until condition resolves.
7. Contaminated towels should be disposed of/disinfected properly.
Follow acceptable guidelines in the immediate control of bleeding and when handling bloody dressings, mouth guards, and other articles containing body fluids.

Park Ranger/Concessions

Park ranger Responsibilities:

- Procure keys and lockbox from previous park ranger.
- Show at park 45 minutes prior to 1st game.
- Unlock concessions, bathrooms, and press box.
- Set up equipment as required (bases, lines, pitching machines, scoreboards, PA, lights, etc.)
- Brief concession workers on procedures and safety items.
- Enforce safety rules and other NVLL policies during games.
- Be available to settle disputes.
- Secure all equipment after last game
- Count concession money and secure lockbox
- Secure all facilities

Concessions:

- Show 30 minutes prior to scheduled game start time.
- Talk to park ranger about policies, procedures, and safety.
- Review posted checklist confirming ranger's briefing.
- Find a replacement if a worker is unavailable for a scheduled shift!

Niceville/Valparaiso Little League
WEB SITE: www.nvllb.org
Phone Numbers

Niceville Police (non-emergency)	729-4030
Valparaiso Police (non-emergency)	729-5400
Sheriffs Office	651-7400
Emergency	911

Niceville/Valparaiso Little League Board

Safety Officer	Brad Schneider	cell 259-3553	729-8639
President	Dennis Samac		678-6682
Vice-President	Greg Rackley		897-1005
Secretary	Patty Mullen		897-0830
Treasurer	Cheryl Patrick		897-0836
NVLL Player Agent	Mike Rarick		897-1256
Player Agent Tee-Ball	Paul Keith		685-7884
Player Agent Minor-C	Will Howell		855-4175
Player Agent Minor-B	Darren Boisjolie		678-6357
Player Agent Minor-A	Sam Sager		897-0975
Player Agent Majors	Sue Sorenson		897-2848
Player Agent Softball	Patty Mullen		897-0830
Player Agent Teen	Joe Friedman		897-2351
Other Members	Jim Brock		678-8481
	Lynette Connelly		897-5619
	Bryan Cooper		678-8408
	Greg Dawson		729-2143
	Leslie Gossett		897-1577
	Paul Keith		685-7884
	Tim Lord		729-3073
	Angela Marshall		678-9207
	Mike McDorman		678-2099
	Dale Olds		897-1785
	Jim Piel		279-6353
	Rick Quesenberry		729-3350
	Renee Ramirez		897-2808
	Terry Rarick		897-2634
	Sarah Saris		678-2035
	Deedy Smith		729-0211
	Larry Stelck		729-1496
	Craig Vinson		678-6835
	Renee Walker		678-2163

LOCAL RULES RELATING TO SAFETY

Managers and coaches are responsible for the safety and behavior of their players on and around the field (including practice).

Attire

Dress will be in accordance with LLB Rule 1.11 and only players' last names, as listed on registration cards, and sponsors will be allowed on uniforms.

Batting/catcher's helmets should not be painted unless approved by the manufacturer.

Minor B (machine-pitch)

When a team is batting, two adult coaches and the adult pitcher(umpire) are permitted on the field. The coaches must remain in the coaching boxes at all times during play.

The "pitcher" on the team in the field does not pitch. He is a fielder only. He must begin each pitch at a distance from the plate even with the pitching machine with one foot touching the safety circle and the other foot outside the circle. For safety reasons, he cannot leave this position (even on an attempted bunt) until the ball exits the pitching machine.

For safety reasons, no infielder may play closer than 30 feet away from the batter.

If any fielder enters the safety circle during a "live ball" situation or deflects (or throws) a live ball into the safety circle, the umpire will halt play and award the runner(s) the next base to which the base runner was headed. Additional bases may be awarded, per the umpire's judgment, for extra-base hits or intentional safety circle violations. "Entering the safety circle" includes stepping into, falling into, and/or placing one's hand or gloved hand inside the safety circle.

Batter Warm-up

Warming up batters prior to a game using a batting stick, soft-toss, wiffle balls, or other means must be done within the field or batting cage. This warm-up shall not take place between fields at Twin Oaks. Additionally, pitching machines shall not be used on the field one-hour prior to a game. An on-deck batter is not permitted in Little League (except for Junior/Senior Leagues), but the first batter of each inning may take practice swings prior to his at bat. A batting stick is not permitted when taking these practice swings.

Lightning Policy

The capricious nature of thunderstorms makes them extremely dangerous; however, following proven lightning safety guidelines can reduce the risk of injury or death. Managers, coaches and Park Rangers have the responsibility to act to ensure the safety of the children when threatened by lightning. NVLL has purchased and will use SkyScan Lightning Detectors at all parks. Instructions for operating Lightning Detectors will be posted inside each concession stand. These devices detect bursts of electromagnetic radiation in the form of very low frequency radio signals generated by lightning flashes up to 40 miles away. The following lightning policy has been implemented, and **will be enforced**, by NVLL.

When a ground strike of lightning has occurred within eight miles of the park, the Park Ranger will generate **three 5-second air horn blasts**. If the field is equipped with a PA system, Park Rangers should use it to inform participants to immediately evacuate the fields. When you hear the air horn blasts or announcement, you must:

- Suspend all games and practices immediately.
- Stay away from metal including fencing and bleachers.
- Get EVERYONE to clear the outdoor facility and walk (not run) to seek shelter in a car or building. Dugouts are NOT considered adequate protection from lightning.
- If park patrons refuse to leave the facilities, they do so at their own risk. However, Managers should ensure all players are accounted for and protected.
- Ensure everyone remains in their vehicle or building until the Park Ranger generates the “All Clear” signal, which is **one (1) long air horn blast**. This will occur when 30 minutes have elapsed with no ground strikes within eight miles

Managers who do not comply with the above are subject to immediate disciplinary action by the board.

The ultimate truth about lightning is that it is unpredictable and cannot be prevented. Therefore, any manager, coach, or umpire who feels threatened by an approaching storm should stop play and get the kids to safety—regardless of whether or not the lightning detector goes off. If parents are attending a game where they feel the weather is unsafe but the umpires do not suspend the game, they always have the right to leave the game and take their kids with them.

OTHER RULES RELATING TO SAFETY

Little league baseball statement on non-wood bats:

Little League Baseball has received numerous inquiries from its volunteers and media regarding the safety of non-wood bats.

Recent innovations in metal alloys have allowed a reduction in the weight of some models of bats, while allowing the bats to remain in conformity with the length and diameter guidelines in the various divisions of Little League Baseball. Some volunteers and those in the media have raised questions about whether the weight of the bats used in Little League games should be limited, relative to the length.

Non-wood bats were first developed, partly through research by Little League, as a safer and more cost-effective alternative to wooden bats. Non-wood bats were first used in Little League in 1971, and have almost completely replaced wood bats in all divisions of play. Wood bats, which can break in half if not used properly, are now widely used only in professional baseball.

As a member of USA Baseball, the governing body for all amateur baseball in the U.S., Little League Baseball follows the recommendation of the USA Baseball Medical and Safety Advisory Committee. The position of the Advisory Committee is that further research and data needs to be collected before any changes are made to Little League rules regarding the weight of bats. There is currently no rule in any division of Little League Baseball that places a maximum or minimum limit on the weight of bats.

In conclusion, there appears to be no indication that would cause Little League to mandate a limit on the weight of bats, based on the most current facts. Statistics show that Little League's record on safety continues to be outstanding not only among youth sports, but in baseball and softball in particular.

Maximum Bat Length/Diameter Specifications in Little League Baseball

	<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Max length</i>	<i>Max diameter</i>
Baseball	12 year olds and under	33 inches	2 1/4 inches
Baseball	13-16 year olds	34 inches	2 3/4 inches
Baseball	16-18 year olds	38 inches	2 3/4 inches

Pitching Distances

	<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Distance</i>
Baseball	12 year olds and under	46 feet
Baseball	13 year olds and above	60 feet, 6 inches
Baseball	Junior League 13-15 year olds (optional)	54-foot

For more information contact:

Lance Van Auken, Director of Publications and Media Relations

Little League Baseball International Headquarters 570-326-1921

Media E-mail: media@littleleague.org

**THE FOLLOWING LETTERS ARE TAKEN FROM LITTLE LEAGUE'S SAFETY
NEWSLETTER "ASAP."**

Painted Batting Helmets:

"I'm trying to locate specific information related to the topic of 'painted' batting helmets. Is there any reference in Little League regulations that prevents All-Star Teams from painting their helmets? I've had people come to me for information regarding this issue and cannot find any references to it. It's my understanding that helmets cannot be altered with paint due to the possibility of material incompatibility. If helmets are painted, will this void the warranty of the equipment? Please advise so that we can prepare our All-Star umpiring staff for the upcoming All-Star season."

**Dale Johnson, Safety Officer
Maryland District 5
Rising Sun Community Little League**

Helmets should not be painted. According to information supplied by manufacturer Rawlings, applying paint to the surface of batting helmets could degrade the plastic, and will void the warranty. The correct paint to use is not available for retail sale. Any other paint than that authorized by the company may deteriorate the shell, risking the player's safety and voiding the warranty and company's liability. Although not a rule, since 1998 Little League has held the position that batting helmets not be painted, and recommends not using any that have been painted.

Bat Sleeves:

"What is the position of Little League Baseball on the use of 'Bat Sleeves' (weighted lengths of hard material that slip over the bat. Clearly bat donuts are not allowed but we are unclear about these new sleeves."

**Bill Needles
Laguna Hills Little League**

Bat rasps, or sleeves, are designed in a different manner than the traditional bat donut. Donuts can be purchased for different sizes of bats, and were generally purchased for the bigger bats, so Little Leaguers would put them on, swing them, and the donut could slip over the barrel of the bat, and injure someone nearby. The bat sleeve just fits over the knob of the bat, and doesn't pose a risk of flying off the end of the barrel when it's being swung. So it is approved for use by all ages of players in Little League.

Catcher's Masks:

"Many catchers are now wearing the hockey style masks. My understanding is they still need to wear a dangling throat protector as required by Little League rules. Some coaches claim they have been told they do not need the dangling throat protector. Question: Are any hockey style or other style catchers helmets approved for use without the dangling throat protector?"

Tom Howard, safety officer

Howell Central Little League, Howell NJ

ALL hockey style catchers masks are required to have an additional “dangling” style throat protector, as are all catchers’ masks, by Little League Rule (Rule 1.17): “...Catcher’s helmet must meet NOCSAE specifications and standards. All catchers must wear a mask, ‘dangling’ type throat protector and catcher’s helmet during practice, pitcher warm-up and games.” This piece protects the catcher’s vulnerable throat area from harm when the head is tipped back. Because of the danger to catchers from swinging bats, it is important that the critical head-neck area remain protected even while a catcher is following the flight of a foul ball.

Lightning:

“I have a couple of questions regarding electrical storms:

- 1. As an electrical storm approaches, should a game be postponed, or is it acceptable for the kids to evacuate to automobiles to allow time for the storm to pass?*
- 2. Does Little League have any guidelines of electrical storms? What does Little League regard as ‘best practices?’*

**Dave Dancause, safety officer
Cape Elizabeth, Maine, Little League**

As a general rule, equipment is available for tracking storms, like SkyScan, which makes it safer to play when clouds are threatening, stated Risk Management Director Dan Kirby. “You certainly don’t want kids exposed to the risk thunderstorms pose, even while waiting to see if a storm will miss you. Players and spectators shouldn’t be in the dug-out and shouldn’t be leaning against the fence, but should be evacuated to the safest place.” Inside a building or inside cars with windows rolled up is the best alternative to a building. How long you should wait depends on the storm itself, and how quickly it passes out of the area. If you don’t have a detector, you should wait at least until you can no longer see any lightning strikes. But remember: lightning strikes can be up to 10 miles apart, so err on the side of caution and safety in retaking the field.

Have a question or tip to share?

Call the ASAP Hotline: 800-811-7443, or e-mail: asap@musco.com

Or write:

**ASAP
100 1st Ave.
West Oskaloosa, IA 52577**

COACH'S TIPS

Attitude

An attitude of alertness, hustle and enthusiasm is recommended for the most efficient development of player skills as well as keeping the players focused, which leads to a safer little league program.

Warm-Up Drills

Warming up before a practice session is a means of safeguarding youngsters from poor physical condition and lack of limbering up. This includes calisthenics and stretching.

Use of the term "warming-up drills" refers to ball handling practice rather than calisthenics. There is a serious accident exposure due to misdirected balls. The following will reduce the danger of being struck by a misdirected ball:

1. All unauthorized people should remain off the field during drills.
2. Reduce the number of targets.
3. One of the best preventive measures is to stress that the eye must be kept on the ball. This concept should continuously be drilled into both adults and youngsters so that it becomes a reflex action
4. Throwing and catching drills should be set up with players in two lines facing one another.

Another danger from misdirected balls is the exposure of inexperienced batters to wild pitchers. The use of batter's helmets is a must. However, it does not justify permitting a potential pitcher throwing to an inexperienced batter until control is demonstrated.

Conditioning

This important phase of Little League training has a direct bearing on developing a safe personal condition. Extensive studies on the effect of conditioning, commonly known as "warm-up," have demonstrated that the stretching and contracting of muscles just before an athletic activity improves general control of movements, coordination and alertness. Such drills also help develop the strength and stamina needed by the average youngster to compete with minimum accident exposure. These warm-up skills are most effective when the motions are patterned after natural baseball movements such as reaching for a ball, running and similar footwork. This is a good place also to "drive home" the basic safeguard of keeping the eye on the ball.

Safe Ball Handling

Teach the following for safe ball handling of fly balls and grounders:

1. The player should never lose sight of a ball from the time it leaves the bat.
2. The player should keep the glove positioned and the body relaxed for a last split-second move.
3. An infielder can best be protected by an aggressive short-hop fielding play by always keeping the "nose pointed at the ball" and eyes glued on it. Also, if moving forward, the player is in a better position to make a throw.

4. Misjudging the flight of a batted ball may be corrected by drilling with fly balls that begin easy and become more difficult as a player's judgment and skill improves. Everyone should eventually be able to handle balls that go overhead.

Collisions

Collisions result in more injuries than most other types of accidents. They are usually caused by errors of judgment or lack of teamwork between fielders. It is important to establish zones of defense to avoid collisions between players. It is particularly important when players are chasing high fly balls. Once the zones are established, play situation drills should be held until these zones and patterns become familiar to the players. The responsible player should call out the intentions in a loud voice to warn others away. Here are some general rules to follow:

1. The fielder at third base should catch all balls, which are reachable and are hit between third and the catcher.
2. The fielder at first base should catch all balls reachable, which are hit between second and the catcher.
3. The shortstop should call all balls reachable, which are hit behind third base.
4. The fielder at second base should catch all balls reachable, which are hit behind first base.
5. The shortstop has the responsibility for fly balls hit in the center of the diamond and in the area of second base. Since the glove is on the left hand it is easier for the shortstop than the fielder at second to catch fly balls over second base.
6. The centerfielder has the right of way in the outfield and should catch all balls which are reachable. Another player should take the ball if it is seen that it is not reachable by the centerfielder.
7. Outfielders should have priority over infielders for fly balls hit between them.
8. Priorities are not so easy to establish on ground balls, but most managers expect their base player to field all ground balls they can reach, cutting in front of the shortstop on slow hit grounders.
9. The catcher is expected to field all topped and bunted balls, which can be reached except when there is a force play or squeeze play at home plate.

Warning Track

In addition to collisions between players, occasionally a player chasing a fly ball will crash into the fence. These accidents also can be controlled by suitable drill work. In this case it is simply a matter of giving the outfielders an opportunity to practice getting the feel of the warning track under their feet. They must learn to judge their distance from the fence and the probable point where the ball will come down. It would be worse than futile to not only miss catching the ball by a wide margin but also be injured by a collision with the fence.

Retrieving Balls

Only persons who have been specifically assigned to that duty should retrieve balls that go out of the park. Such persons should be youngsters who can be relied on not to endanger themselves by climbing fences or getting into a scramble for possession of a ball.

Keep Grounds Clear

Another duty that should be given to alert substitute players is the picking up of bats and proper placement in the rack. Clearing up other loose playing equipment should also be included in this assignment.

Sliding Safety

As is the case with other baseball fundamentals, a correct slide is also a safe one. It is also advisable to guard against collision with a fielder and the possibility of a player being struck by a thrown ball as that player "hits the dirt." The following can make the learning period safer:

1. Long grass has been found to be better than a sand or sawdust pit to teach sliding.
2. The base must not be anchored down.
3. Sliding pads are recommended.
4. The player should make approaches at half speed and keep hands and feet in the air. Once committed to the slide, the player must not change strategy. Last minute hesitation causes most sliding injuries.
5. Tennis shoes are suggested for beginning sliding and tagging practice to avoid injury to the defensive player.
6. If the ground along the baselines becomes soft on a rainy day, such weather offers an excellent opportunity to have sliding drills.

Batter Safety

A batter's greatest accident exposure is from the unsafe acts of others, namely wild pitches, which account for a major portion of all accidents. Again, the best defense is an alert, confident concentration on the ball. This type of injury is more prevalent in Regular than in Minor League play. Since the danger is increased as pitchers learn to throw with greater force and as more games are played, it is doubly important to take whatever counter measures necessary to offset this exposure.

1. A well-fitted, NOCSAE approved helmet is the first requirement.
2. The development of the novice batter's ability to take evasive action can be improved by getting the player to relax and concentrate on the ball from the time the pitcher starts delivery until it lands in the catcher's mitt. Players with slow reflexes can also be helped by stimulated batting and ducking practice with a tennis ball.
3. The unsportsmanlike practice of crowding the plate or jumping around to rattle the pitcher must not be tolerated. This could endanger the batter if it causes the pitcher to lose control. Umpires should stop such actions.
4. Making sure the batter holds the bat correctly when bunting can reduce painful finger and hand injuries. Youngsters have a tendency to lean too far

over the plate and not keep the ball well out toward the end of the bat. This should be corrected.

5. When the batter becomes a base runner, that player should be taught to run outside the foul lines when going from home plate to first and from third to home, to reduce the chance of being hit by a thrown ball.

Safe Handling of Bats

The most easily prevented type of accident is the too frequent fault of beginners throwing the bat while running to first base. This unthinking act may be corrected through individual instruction to drop the bat safely by:

1. Having the player hand the bat to the coach will serve as a reminder before each ball is pitched.
2. Having the player drop the bat in a marked-off circle near where running starts.
3. Counting the player "out" in practice whenever the player fails to drop the bat correctly.
4. Providing bats with grips that are not slippery.
5. Coaches and umpires should be on the alert to correct batters that have a tendency to step into the catcher as they swing.

A Dangerous Weapon

An accident that may sound impossible but which has caused several very serious accidents is an absent-minded youngster who unconsciously walks into the swing of the coach's bat when the coach is hitting flies, or the equally unwary player who walks into the swing of a player warming up with the. The player, usually a catcher, assigned to catching balls for the coach hitting flies should be given the specific assignment of warning away anyone who comes too close. The ingrained safety habit of keeping clear may save someone a painful injury.

Catcher Safety

The catcher, as might be expected from the amount of action involved has more accidents than any other player. Statistics show that the severity of injuries is less in Major, Junior, and Senior Leagues than in Minor League play. Again, this bears out the fact that the more proficient the player, the less chance of injury. Assuming that the catcher is wearing the required protection the greatest exposure is to the ungloved hand. The catcher must learn to

1. Keep it relaxed.
2. Always have the back of the throwing hand toward the pitcher when in position to catch.
3. Hold all fingers in a cupped position near the mitt, ready to trap the ball and throw it.
4. The catcher should also be taught to throw the mask and catcher's helmet in the direction opposite the approach in going for a high fly.
5. As the catcher learns to play this difficult position, a good habit is to keep a safe distance back from the swinging bat. Estimate this as one foot farther from the batter than the ends of the outstretched fingers.

6. To repeat, the best protection is keeping the eye on the ball.

General Inattention

Going one step back to the "whys" of most ball handling accidents, it appears that inattention due to inaction or boredom is an underlying accident cause with which we must deal. This situation can be partly offset by using idle time to practice basics of skillful and safe play, such as:

1. Otherwise idle fielders should be encouraged to "talk it up." Plenty of chatter encourages hustle and enthusiasm.
2. Players waiting for a game or practice to start can pair off and play catch to improve their basic eye-on-the ball technique.
3. Practice should include plenty of variety in the drill work.
4. Put a time limit on each drill and do not hold the total practice for more than two hours. Cut practice short if interest begins to lag.
5. Idle players along the sidelines can be given the job of studying the form of other players to improve their own techniques. They may then report on what they have learned to improve their own form on running, ball handling, throwing, batting and sliding.

Control of Horseplay

No discussion of measures to control the human element in accident-prevention would be complete without going into the problem of horseplay. This includes any type of youthful high jinks that could even remotely be the cause of an accident. Even a mild form of such childish behavior could distract any player about to catch a ball or possibly when at bat, and result in an accident. After all -- team play requires 100% cooperation among all players, and good sportsmanship demands courtesy to opposing players. If show-offs and smart-alecks cannot find sufficient outlet for their high spirits in the game, quick and impartial disciplinary action must be taken.

Physical Checkups

An important way that physical checkups can prevent accidents is obtaining a medical release to play ball after a player has recovered from an accident. If this final medical checkup is for evaluation of the player's recovery from an injury covered by "accident insurance," the cost can be charged against the original claim.

Little League Regulation III (d) states, "When a player misses more than seven (7) continuous days of participation for an illness or injury, a physician or other accredited medical provider must give written permission for a return to full baseball/softball activity."