

BASEBALL BAT REFERENDUM FOR CLL

As CLL president I feel it is necessary to address the issue with bats. This is a question that comes up every spring and is challenging for both parents and players.

As many of you are aware, and for those who are new to baseball, the ongoing issue with bats has been a thorn in the side of CLL as well as many other associations. The issue that arises comes from the ever-changing list of legal/illegal bats (bats we are allowed to use in each division).

If you go to LLC (Little League Canada) web page and look on the “Bat Resource” link you will find a list of legal bats. This list is 9 pages long with approximately 60 bats per page. That is 540 bats that you could be searching info on to identify the \$200+ that you have just spent last year on a bat for your child. This list changes every year!

They are making progress in limiting the available bats that can be used in LLI (Little League International) play. They are trying (with little success) to create a “wood like response” to a composite bat. The problem is that at the present moment only one bat supplier is close to this result. If they are successful, this will again change the bat list. I foresee limited availability to these bats, especially in the first year. They will be made available in Canada, however I have found that the choices are limited especially in Calgary, to find a good bat that meets all standards. Not only that, but they changing the available barrel sizes for some divisions this year and most divisions next year.

For a guy like myself who started playing competitive ball 38yrs ago, I am a purest of the game. I like grass outfields and grass infields. I like sunflower seeds on the bench and in the stands, hotdogs and cold beer, sunny days and games under the lights. There is nothing better than watching ball players race around the bases, get thrown out at second on attempted steals and caught in a well-executed run down from 3rd to home. All of these things make the game great, but there is one thing that baseball has over all other sports. The greatest sound ever created.

“THE SOUND OF A BALL BEING HIT BY A WOODEN BAT”

There is something special about this. Little League has lost that in my opinion. In an attempt to create “excitement” in baseball by having players able to hit farther, we sacrifice the idea of baseball. “All players are equal until we get to bat”. Great players, no matter what are great hitters. Players do not become great hitters by having check swings fly over an outfielders head because of a composite bat. They need to swing hard. When I was 17 I was invited to a camp put on by the Montreal Expos through the Calgary Vipers. Yes they were still around then. After the 3-day camp, the lead instructor sat us down and told me something I will never forget. Scouts are looking for players that can run like the wind, throw from center field to home base on wire, and hit the ball hard and far. Of these 3 things, if you can hit the ball safely 3 out of 10 times, that is a .300 batting average, they will find a place for you on the team.

How do we address this issue with our little community ball program?

Centennial Little League has always supplied bats with the equipment, this will continue. For this season I have directed our equipment manager to start supplying wooden bats. We are hoping to acquire the bats soon, but cannot guarantee they will be available for the beginning of the season. This initiative will apply to all divisions from T-ball to Big League.

I know what you are thinking; my son/daughter cannot swing a wooden bat? We will be hopefully acquiring bats that are suitable weight and length for all ages. In my experience as a coach for Big League players and fall ball high school, I can tell you that the older kids really like using wooden bats.

Does this mean children cannot use their own bat? NO. They can still use their own bat as long as it meets requirements set out in LLI standards.

I would encourage your players to try the wooden bats once they are available so they can see the difference.

Thanks and good luck on the diamonds.

Chris Bentley
President
CLL