

## **SAFETY EQUIPMENT POSITION STATEMENT OF ORANGE LITTLE LEAGUE**

Orange Little League and its Board of Directors are concerned with the health and safety of every child who participates in its programs at all levels. Over the years, technology advances in equipment have caused local and national little league governing bodies to review their positions on these advances. One area of focus is the presence of high tech composite bats in youth baseball. This particular advancement has presented organizations like Orange Little League with a number of controversial issues.

The benefits of composite bats including their durability and greater bat exit speeds have impacted the game with positive offensive statistical performance. On the other hand, the same greater bat exit speeds combined with decreased player reaction time have produced several alarming incidents involving injuries to pitchers and corner infielders, nationally, and in the state of Connecticut, including 2 episodes just last year in Orange.

Since 1989 USA Baseball has monitored baseball injuries on a National level. Over a 10 year period between 1989 and 1998, utilizing the Little League group insurance plan, the rate of significant face/head/neck injuries from a batted ball was found to be 2/100,000 players per season. Another recent article published by USA Baseball notes that among 14 other youth baseball organizations over the 17 year period between 1989-2005, (with a total of 82 million participants at risk), there were reported 39 fatalities, 25 disabling injuries and 29 significant injuries with complete recovery. *Within those numbers, 27 injuries were caused by a batted ball.*

While the number of serious injuries does not appear great statistically, it is the position of Orange Little League that any such injuries are to be avoided if reasonably possible. In furtherance of that goal, this past year the Orange Little League board debated whether or not to mandate the use of protective helmets and/or facemasks for pitchers and/or corner infielders. While long term statistics on a national level clearly demonstrate an extremely low risk of injury to pitchers and infielders by a batted ball, real life incidents can be emotional and overwhelmingly persuasive. The pros for use of such equipment are obvious. The cons for use of such equipment include decreased comfort, limitation of vision and a perceived alteration of player performance.

Like all youth sports, the intent of Little League baseball is to provide a fun safe environment while enhancing motor/social skill development. As in all sports, baseball comes with certain implied risks related to health and safety of its participants during play. To date, neither Little League International nor USA Baseball have mandated, or strongly recommended, that pitchers and/or infielders participating in little league baseball be required to wear head or face protection. Based upon those recommendations, for the 2010 season Orange Little League will not require pitchers or infielders at any level to wear protective head or face gear while pitching or while playing any defensive position other than catcher.

**With the recent unfortunate events that occurred last year, Orange Little League strongly urges parents to consider that players wear protective helmets while pitching and while playing the corner infield positions.**

However, Orange Little League remains committed to educating parents of the potential risks involved in participation in baseball and the methods of minimizing those risks. Until further analysis is

completed by national governing bodies, the ultimate decision to use or not to use optional safety equipment like helmets and facemasks remains with the parent or legal guardian.

To further our commitment to provide members with information that will empower them to make the most informed decisions regarding the use of protective equipment for their children, please feel free to review the following resources available to you:

1. Little League: [www.littleleague.org](http://www.littleleague.org)
2. USA Baseball Medical/safety Advisory Committee reports: [www.usabaseball.com](http://www.usabaseball.com)
3. American Sports Medicine Institute (ASMI), Birmingham Alabama: [www.asmi.org](http://www.asmi.org)
4. National Institute for Sports Science and Safety: no web, use search engine
5. Consumer Product Safety Commission: [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)
6. Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association: [www.sgma.com](http://www.sgma.com)
7. National Athletic Trainers Association: [www.nata.org](http://www.nata.org)

We ask that you sign this document and return it to your teams' manager as acknowledgement of receipt of the above information.

Parent or Legal Guardian

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Please print name below:

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