



## Baseball Pitchers: New Protection from Traumatic Brain Injuries

by *John Demas* on 03/16/11

Given how fast baseballs fly during most games, it's a wonder that pitchers didn't begin routinely wearing protective helmets long ago. Fortunately, at least one sporting goods equipment company has created a prototype that should work for the smallest little league players all the way up through their adult counterparts in the major leagues.

### Need for This Type of Gear

All too often, head injuries cause players of various sports to sustain serious, if not fatal, conditions. Brain swelling, concussions, comas and other less predictable conditions can develop. One such case involved Gunnar Sandberg, a teenage pitcher for Marin Catholic High. After he was struck by a line drive, Sandberg suffered major brain swelling. His doctors had to place him in a medically induced coma to try and diminish the swelling. Sandberg's injury reminded many sports officials, as well as the general public, that football players aren't the only ones in danger of suffering traumatic brain injuries. Fortunately, Sandberg's treatment proved successful. He'll be returning to the pitcher's mound this spring, gladly wearing a new pitcher's helmet.

According to the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), other young people have suffered even more serious baseball injuries. In fact, the CPSC quoted statistics for one year during which **21 children died** due to their baseball head injuries. (Another 38 young people died that same year after baseballs hit them in the chest.)

## Description of New Pitcher's Helmet (and Other Possible Future Headgear)

Sandberg and others will be pleased that the new pitcher's helmet designed by Easton-Bell shouldn't interfere with their pitching duties. It's made of expanded polystyrene (EPS) that's very lightweight and capable of absorbing energy. Easton-Bell scientists designed the helmet after viewing the footage of 5,000 pitchers playing baseball.

Sandberg's own father seems pleased with the results. After first seeing the new helmet, **Bjorn Sandberg** said, "A product like this will give us much more confidence when he's out there." The **helmet looks a bit like** a baseball cap enhanced with quality padding in many of a pitcher's most vulnerable areas.

Other baseball players will get their first chance to purchase one of these helmets by the fall of 2011. Easton-Bell CEO Paul Harrington says that if the baseball pitcher's helmet quickly catches on with players, the company will begin looking at other sports in need of additional protective head gear.

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