



Physical exercise is important to health and well-being. Scouts are more inclined to exercise when it is a side benefit of a fun activity such as gaga ball. Scouts also learn organization and sportsmanship from both formal and informal competitions.

However, any exercise done poorly can result in injury. The incidents below highlight several such injuries. Please share and learn from these incidents to prevent future occurrences.

Incident Review #1

A 13-year-old Boy Scout was playing in and out of a gaga ball pit with his Scouting friends. While playing, one boy hit his head on the ground after being pushed by another boy. He received a concussion.

Key Points

- Practice good sportsmanship. Teaching sportsmanship is a part of good coaching and supervision. It minimizes unnecessary aggression on the field.
- Play by the rules. Teach young athletes to respect the rules of their sport and help them understand why rules are important.
- Check the playing surface before and during use. If it is unsafe, leaders should clear any hazards, such as trash, rocks, and unnecessary equipment, before allowing use of the pit.

Incident Review #2

A 15-year-old staff member collided with another while playing gaga ball at camp. The staff member stated that the side of his face was hurting and that he had spit out tooth fragments.

Key Points

- Conduct a safety PAUSE before starting the game so that all participants are ready and aware.
- Hazards can exist in many forms—human error being one of them. Be mindful of yourself and other Scouts in your area when participating in Scouting activities.

Incident Review #3

A 12-year-old Boy Scout was playing gaga ball. When he returned to his campsite, he started wheezing and had tightness in his chest. He had a history of asthma but did not have an inhaler.

Key Points

- Scouting games and having fun are important to everyone in Scouting—and so is your safety and well-being. Completing the Annual Health and Medical Record is the first step in making sure you have a great Scouting experience. Know your limits.
- Selecting a dusty playing surface could lead to aggravating breathing conditions.

“ Being aware of your own personal limitations makes a Scout more likely to avoid certain risks when playing in games.”





Incident Review #4

A 49-year-old staff member fell on his right side while playing gaga ball. He reported that he heard a snap and felt some pain. After consultation, he was diagnosed with a bruised rib and a possible fracture.

Key Points

- Falls on a playground are a common cause of injury.
- Safe surfaces for gaga pits are wood chips or sand (not rocks or pebbles), well maintained and with a depth of 2 feet.
- Serious injuries can occur from what might seem like an innocent game. All participants should keep aware of their surroundings and look for hazards.

Discussion Questions

Those who have experience in gaga ball should be asked:

- What are some of the hazards that might come up when playing gaga ball?
- Why are the rules important?
- How does gaga ball promote safe Scouting and fair play?
- Under what conditions should a Scout report a gaga ball injury?

Resources

- Scouting Safely—<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/>
- Gaga Ball Information—<https://icebreakerideas.com/gaga-ball>
- Building a Gaga Pit—www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/test/Gaga_Pit_Plans.pdf



“ Communicate positive safety messages and serve as a model of safe behavior and following the rules.”