



# The things you can learn from batting with a cucumber

**Ned Hickson**

While walking through our local park last weekend and watching small children participate in one of America's favorite pastimes (no, not scrolling through their smart phones), I was reminded of my daughter's first season of T-ball.

We bought a mitt, ball, practice tee and all the equipment necessary to get started on the basics.

For obvious reasons, we

saw no need to purchase an athletic cup — until I decided to advise her about batting stance, at which point it became obvious that I should have.

At least for myself.

Though practice ended a little early that first day, we were back at it the following afternoon — my daughter with her bat and a look of determination, and me offering advice and encouragement a safe distance away with my bullhorn.

It was one of those father/daughter moments that lasted just long enough for me to realize it, but long

enough for our neighbor to cross the street and threaten to shove my bull horn somewhere that isn't located on any ball field.

With that, we decided to try some fielding practice; I'd hit the ball to her, and she'd practice leaping on it with her eyes closed. Before we could do that, however, I had to actually HIT the ball.

In my defense, I was using her bat, which is roughly the size of a cucumber. Also in my defense, let me just say that the cucumber and I have about the same degree of hand-eye coordination.

Yet, between the two of us,

we still couldn't hit the ball.

As a father, this is very embarrassing.

(As a cucumber, it's no big deal.)

On the other hand, this was a good opportunity to teach my daughter about the importance of not giving up, and how, through patience and determination, you can do anything.

I say this all in retrospect, having hurled her cucumber bat over the top of the house in a fit of frustration.

In spite of all this, when it came time for our daughter's first official T-ball practice that week, we felt ready.

For those of you who've never watched T-ball, the rules are roughly the same as baseball; the ball is hit, the batter runs the bases, and 15 infielders throw their mitts at the ball in order to stop it.

Once that is accomplished, everyone runs to a spot about eight inches in front of home plate — which is where the ball has usually landed after gravity, and a solid hit to the neck of the tee, has advanced the ball.

This isn't always the case, however. In fact, some of the kids I saw could really whack the ball. If not for them, the outfielders walking around

with mitts on their faces pretending to be monsters might not have seen any action at all.

In the end, it is the ability to cover your face with your mitt and run around in circles until you trip over a sprinkler head that separates T-ball from major league baseball.

I'd even say that professional baseball could learn a thing or two from T-ball.

But not before I learn how to hit the ball with a cucumber.

*Ned is a syndicated columnist with News Media Corporation. Write to him at nedhickson@icloud.com*

## OPRD offers overnight for novice campers

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) welcomes beginning campers to join in an overnight guided camping experience this summer at an Oregon state park.

Registrations are being accepted for the "Let's Go Camping Program."

Events will be held at nine different parks.

For \$30 per family, OPRD provides tents, sleeping bags

and other gear. Volunteers will help campers set up tents, build campfires, prepare meals in the campsite and more.

Activities could include ranger-led hikes, owl prowls, bat chats and plenty of s'mores.

Register for one of the following events by calling 800-551-6949.

Most events are limited to 35 people and spots are filling quickly:

- June 16-18: L.L.Stub Stewart Park
- June 30-July 2: Deschutes River
- July 7-9: Cascadia
- July 14-16: Willamette Mission
- July 21-23: Silver Falls
- July 21-23: Prineville Reservoir
- July 28-30: Ainsworth
- Aug. 11-13: Milo McIver
- Aug. 25-27: Champoeg
- Sept. 8-10: Memaloose

## Boating

from 1B

including where you are going and when you intend to return.

• **Double-check your equipment.** Before you leave, make sure you have the necessary equipment onboard and that it's all in good working condition.

• **Practice passenger communication.** You're the captain. Don't be afraid to issue instructions. Make sure your passengers and crew know

what's expected of them and where they can find needed equipment. The skipper is obligated to educate everyone on board about matters of safety.

• **Load your boat properly.** Your boat should sit level at the waterline when fully loaded. Load passengers and equipment alternately to achieve proper trim. Pack gear to balance the load, and don't overload. Your boat may have a label identifying its capacity.

• **Wear your life jackets.** Children under 13 must wear life jackets when underway on a recreational boat unless they're in an enclosed cabin or below decks, or unless a more stringent state regulation applies. You're required to have life jackets for everyone on board, and everyone should

wear one.

• **Check engine compartment, and run blowers, if applicable.** Always check your engine compartment for fuel, fuel vapor and water, and run your blower for four minutes to clear the air before running the engines or using electrical devices. Blowers are specially sealed to prevent ignition of fuel vapors. Smell the bilge blower outlet to verify the absence of gas fumes.

• **Start and warm the engine.** Cold engines can stall. Start your engine, and let it run until it's running smoothly before leaving the dock and while you still have the boat under control with lines.

• **Designate an alternate skipper.** Appoint someone to take over should you become incapacitated. Practice different situations where this might be necessary.

To schedule a free vessel safety check from a certified examiner, call Certified Examiner and Coast Guard Auxiliary Staff Officer Jonathan Yoder at 541-991-1181.

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