Stickball Encyclopedia Article

Stickball

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Stickball refers to a form of baseball developed to accommodate play on streets and sidewalks. A janitor's mop handle is the preferred bat, and a pink rubber ball—known as a "Spaulding" or "Spauldeen"—is considered to be the best ball. The ball is pitched or bounced towards the hitter; sewers and chalk markings are used for bases, and a hit may be played off of fire escapes, cars, stoops, or any other urban obstacle.

Stickball traces its origins eighteenth-century English games such as old cat, rounders, and town ball, although some sources trace it back to games played by Plains Indians. As of the 1990s, stickball is still played in its purest form in summer leagues in New York City, and exists in some form in most American cities. Other versions are known as Strikeout, Fast Pitch, Corkball, Bottle Caps, and Fuzzball, and are played with a wide range of bats and balls, sometimes against walls with painted strike zones. Stickball and its variations offer players the chance to use basic baseball skills without requiring full teams of players, expensive gloves or bats, or the rarest of all urban commodities, an open stretch of grass.

Further Reading:

Ravielli, Anthony. *What Are Street Games?* New York, Atheneum, 1981.

Schindler, Steven. *Sewer Balls.* Los Angeles, Elevated Press,1996.

Wirth, Cliff. *Stickball, Streetcars, and Saturday Matiness: Illustrated Memories.* Greendale, Wisconsin, Reiman Publications, 1995.