

BASEBALL

Inventor: Breakaway base could reduce injuries

ELIZABETHTOWN, Pa. (AP) - The inventor of a breakaway base has won over the hearts and ankles of softball and baseball players, although his claim that the major leagues will covert could be baseless.

Roger Hall, a former baseball coach at an American college, is the developer of the Rogers Break Away Base, a big-league lookalike that detaches when baserunners risk injury on a slide that's too fast or too poor.

A university study found Hall's base reduced injuries 96% during a three-year test, and a sports medicine group found even better results among minor-league teams. Still, Hall is finding the big leagues balking at his safety feature.

"It happens every day; someone gets busted up," Hall said. "You have pro players getting hurt under

ideal conditions, and then you have millions of Americans playing ball on pothole fields,"

Hall's anchoring system is the same as a one-piece base, with a square metal rod fitted into a buried foundation. The difference is the top is attached to a plate with rubber grommets that release when pressure is too great.

Eight grommets are used for youth league bases, 12 for teen leagues, 16 for adult leagues and 20 for advanced or professional players. The higher the number of grommets, the tighter the base is held.

When a base separates, the rubber plate remains to mark the original spot of the bag. Hall includes a rule suggestion for umpires with each set of bases.

The Fayetteville (N.C.) Generals, a Class A team of the Detroit Tigers, installed the bases last year.



Bob Gilson, general manager of the London, Ont., Tigers in the Eastern League, also installed the Rogers bases last year.

"One of our guys last year did get hurt on the road, and said if it had been a breakaway base he would have been OK," Gilson said. Still, he said, he doesn't believe the big leagues will use the bases because of tradition. -*Guelph Daily Mercury*

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