

New Mandatory Batting Helmet to Reduce Risk of Concussions Begins Use in MLB

Written by Maury Brown
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The Rawlings S100 Pro Comp batting helmet can sustain pitches of 100mph and reduces the risk of concussion. All players will now be using it as part of latest labor agreement between MLB and the players.

While the NFL has grabbed the headlines on the topic, the issue of concussions in Major League Baseball is being taken seriously. The concussion policy that was implemented prior to the 2011 season was improved as part of the latest CBA. As an example, all players undergo neuro-cognitive baseline testing during Spring Training or when they join a club each season. There are various assessment tools—both on the field and off—that trainers use to determine the level of a concussion, and based on that assessment, a player goes on the DL for varying lengths of time, to as little as 7 days or longer.

To try and address the matter further, the league has been working with Rawlings on a new helmet that can reduce the risk of concussions from pitches to the head area at speeds of 100 mph. As part of the new labor agreement, the sides agreed that the new helmet would be in place for the upcoming season, and be an upgrade of the bulkier ones first developed and tested by the likes of David Wright and were given the nickname “Great Gazoo” after the Flinstones character when they were initially tested in 2009 ([see details and image, here](#)) because of the bulkiness.

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Now, the design has been improved and per the labor agreement, will begin seeing use with the start of this week's Spring Training exhibition games. The new S100 Pro Comp batting helmet will become the standard throughout Major League Baseball.

Approximately 200 MLB players elected to wear the Rawlings S100 Pro Comp last year before the league-wide rule went into effect, including National League batting champion Buster Posey of the World Series champion San Francisco Giants.

"Collectively with MLB and the MLB Players Association, we developed the Rawlings S100 Pro Comp batting helmet to provide increased protection for the world's best baseball players, while meeting their specific functional and performance demands," said Art Chou, senior vice president of product for St. Louis-based Rawlings. "The evolution of the Rawlings S100 product line clearly illustrates how we can deliver innovative protective solutions at the very highest level of the sport while still delivering high-performing equipment so these players can continue to play at their peak levels."

According to Rawlings the helmets are constructed of aerospace-grade carbon fiber composite, the new Rawlings S100 Pro Comp batting helmet provides technologically-enhanced protection for ball strikes up to 100 miles per hour. Earlier this week, the innovative Rawlings S100 Pro Comp helmet design was named a finalist for the Edison Awards in the category of material science-composites. The Edison Awards honors excellence in new product development and innovation.

The next-generation S100 Pro Comp is 300-percent stiffer and 130 times stronger than the traditional ABS plastic helmet that was the previous standard in Major League Baseball, yet features a significantly lighter and smaller design than previous S100 models that have been tested in recent years. The similarities in weight and size to the traditional helmet allow for a seamless transition to the Rawlings S100 Pro Comp for all MLB players.

"Protecting our players with the latest innovations in protection equipment is a top priority of Major League Baseball," said Dan Halem, Senior Vice President, Labor Relations, Major League Baseball. "Last year the Rawlings S100 Pro Comp received a great reception from the MLB players that chose to wear it, and we're pleased to take the next step and roll it out league-wide."

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