PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

The following information will allow you to take a "Toes to Nose" approach about your protective equipment to ensure the best chance at avoiding injury.

Throughout the story be reminded that the Ozone Layer we live in, although not harmful to us, does break down the foam in your shoes, shin guards, chest protector and mask pads.

If your equipment is three years or older, time for a change out with the exception of your mask foam pads which should be changed out yearly.

The information provided is not an endorsement of any one product or company, rather a reflection that will allow you to understand the information.

The most physically demanding job an umpire has to perform is standing. Proper footwear will ensure that foot fatigue and soreness won't hamper your ability to umpire.

BASE and PLATE SHOE
Beginning with the back of your shoe, run your finger up and down the back heel area to feel for any seam that the shoe may have to hold the shoe heel cup in place. If you feel a seam, make sure that it does not rub over your heel bone causing friction. That friction can lead to bone spurs, plantar fascitis or Achilles tendinitis/tendonsis.

Another area of shoe fitting is the shoe toe box. You can find your toe box by standing then flexing your shoe to see the crease in your shoe. Space in front of that crease is your individual toe box. When trying on shoes make sure your big toe is in front of the crease to prevent bunions, sesamioditis and toe nail bruising.

If you’re wearing flat laces, dump them! Over time when you cinch up, the laces bind up and hamper circulation. Round laces will not bind up and give you comfort away from "foot fatigue".

When sizing a plate shoe make sure the protective toe plate reaches far enough back on your inside foot that will allow big toe protection. As you progress through your game, your feet go from facing straight to pointing to first and third base and you are exposed.

Always check that the arch plate overlaps with the toe box protective piece toward the toe area and is long enough to reach up to the top of the ankle just below your shin guard.

SHIN GUARD
Your shin guards come in lengths. For a perfect fit, try them on with your knee in a bent or flex position as that is how you use them behind the plate. Make sure that a third pad articulates over the two bottom pads to provide for patella tendon protection.

Clips should be rust free and always clasped to the outside when worn.

CHEST PROTECTOR
Your chest protector comes in various sizes and shapes. Find the protector that allows you good body rotation and does not impede your arm movement. A proper fit for the chest protector requires a partner as you want to be in plate position to tighten the protector up around the neck/clavicle area. If a ball or
your fist can get into your neck area, the protector is to loose. You run the risk of a blow to your clavicle area.

A reminder to check your straps as the season goes on as they will loosen from movement, sweat and travel.

Make sure your chest protector comes with a 3rd protective piece that will protect the AC joint of the shoulder.

Your personal preference on arm extensions of the shoulder pad area.

MASK/BUCKET
Many models from low profile to regular, titanium to steel. Your preference on choice of protective head gear; however, give yourself enough preseason conditioning if you choose to wear a steel mask. The steel is heavier and will require your neck muscles to get used to wearing and anecdotally, absorbs more of the force that is generated into your head from a ball or bat.

Reminder, change your pads every year!

The "hockey style" mask provides the most safety as the head is covered to protect from back swings.

Most wires now come with a throat extension; however, if you have a longer than normal neck, throat guard extensions are available for use.

DO NOT tie or tape the throat guard to be permanent. This device should be allowed to be knocked off taking some of the force with it.