



This article was taken from the ABAU publication.

Shurtz, standing over a barrel of 10 confiscated bats in the press box Wednesday, said bats are taken out of play if any chips or cracks are visible no matter how small.

"Every now and then you will see a bat actually shatter," said Tim McKeown, coach of the BNGSA Angels 12-under team, co-host of the tournament with the Angels 11s. "There are a lot that are fracturing."

Some bats are made of exotic materials including aluminum lined with graphite and titanium. Others are made of composite materials such as carbon fiber, fiber glass and Kevlar.

Bat makers seek to create lighter bats with bigger "sweet spots" so batters can generate more power in their swing.

Shurtz remembers Californians bringing bats to the Quad Cities last year only to learn they couldn't be used.

"They're upset and I'm sorry about that," she said. "As umpires, it is our responsibility that all equipment is safe and legal for the safety of the kids."

Kim Nelson-Brown, coach of the Angels 11s, said her daughter, Tyler, is on her fourth bat of the year.

"It's just kind of frustrating with the amount you pay for a bat," said Nelson-Brown, who has spent \$500 on bats the past seven months and it would have been more if some hadn't been under warranty. "One lasted two practices and one lasted one."

The end caps on Worth brand bats kept breaking for Nelson-Brown, who was forced to call a local sporting goods store Sunday morning to see if she could buy a bat.

"I know there were like four other people doing the same thing," she said. "Bat manufacturers need to step up to the plate." Wallets aren't the only things getting hurt. Olympia Fire coach Doug Haesele said his team had a bat declared illegal at the Firecracker Tournament. "I wasn't upset that they did it," he said. "We had a girl, at that time she was a really hot hitter. It took her mentally out of the rest of the tournament."

Umpires have never taken more bats out of play than in the past two years, according to Shurtz. Bat makers Easton and Demarini have come out with particularly bad models, she said.

"We know now these bats are just terrible," she said. Shurtz's 46 umpires will check every bat on every team before every game this week along with every batting helmet and catcher's mask.

If one player gets hurt because of faulty equipment, she said, "That ruins our tournament."