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DAILY NEWS Boroughs

News Youth Stickball League will start swinging Saturday

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Stickball, a game played on nearly every city street for generations, is back, and Bensonhurst's got it.

On Saturday, the Daily News Youth Stickball League swings into its inaugural season on Bay 19th St. and Bath Ave.

"There was never anything like a stickball Little League when we were growing up," said Curtis Sliwa, who has been named commissioner of the new league. "We're going to be able to introduce a whole new generation of kids to this great city game."

Last weekend, more than two dozen youngsters showed up for a preseason clinic on the game in Coney Island. For most, it was the first time they had ever seen a pink rubber Spalding (pronounced Spal-DEEN) ball, or swung a stickball bat.

"The stick is a little long, and it's kind of tough to catch the ball," lamented 8-year-old Rio Ferrer of the experience.

"I dropped the ball on one play. I would've had it easy if I had a glove. But there are no gloves in stickball."

Once the season starts, young Rio and others are going to find out the game is a lot different than his Kings Bay Little League experience.

"Bay 19th is a very traditional Brooklyn street with trees, and fences and cars," said Sliwa. "So you don't have traditional foul balls. You may think a ball is going foul, but then it will bounce off a car or a fence and it's fair."

One problem the youngsters won't have to face is stopping their games to allow cars to drive up the block. "The local precinct is going to close the street every Saturday until the end of the season on Labor Day," said Sliwa.

And, parents and grandparents are going to love the fact that no mops or brooms are going to be destroyed. "Along with the Spaldeens, all the teams are going to use official Daily News [co-publisher] Fred Drasner autograph-model stickball bats."

Each team will play two seven-inning games each Saturday starting at 10 a.m.

"In one game, there will be no pitching - batters will hit their own ball - in the other game, the ball will be pitched in on one bounce," Sliwa said.

Batters will each get three swings and must run the bases after they hit the ball.



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Marie Mazzeo, 8, makes a hit in a game of stickball sponsored by the Daily News. The News Youth Stickball League kicks off its season Saturday on Bay 19th St. and Bath Ave.

"It's really different, but I really loved it," said Marie Mazzeo, 8, who now can hardly wait for the season to start. "I really liked hitting the ball, it goes pretty far."

There are still openings for boys and girls to sign up to compete.

"Kids can show up on Saturday" to sign up, said Sliwa, adding, "No one will be turned away."

Anyone interested in joining can call the Daily News Youth Stickball League hotline at (718) 393-8484.

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