

On Aug. 21, 2021, 78-year-old Linda Goldbloom was hit by foul ball at the Los Angeles Dodgers stadium. She died one week later at L.A. County Medical Center from “acute intracranial hemorrhage due to blunt force trauma,” according to the Sept. 5, 2021, coroner’s report.

Goldbloom sat just 58 inches outside the protective netting that surrounds the risky area behind home plate called the “slaughter pen.” Annie Savoy, the VP of External Relations for the Los Angeles Dodgers, confirmed that the netting was extended in 2018 to run all the way down the first and third baselines. All 30 Major League Baseball (MLB) teams extended their netting in 2018 after a toddler was hit in the face with a foul ball at Yankee Stadium on Sept. 20, 2017.

Goldbloom’s death is the first in 50 years directly attributed to a foul ball. Previously, 32-year-old Clarence Stagemyer died in 1943 after an errant throw to first hit him at Washington’s Griffith Stadium and 14-year-old Alan Fish died in 1970 after a foul ball hit him in the head at Dodger Stadium.

A 2016 study conducted by Temple University’s Sport research center reported that approximately 1,750 spectators are hurt each year by batted balls, with injuries typically being minor like bruises and bloodied lips. Most of these injuries are due to foul balls.

Injured parties are not eligible for legal recourse because of the “Baseball Rule” described by Professor Nathaniel Grow in the William and Mary Law Review in 2018. After legal precedent set by the 1913 case brought against the Kansas City Blues by S.J. Crane, “as long as teams offer some protected areas, fans sitting outside that zone do so at their own risk.” Warnings are printed on every MLB ticket.

Interviewed later, Grow said that “the typical foul ball enters the stands at speeds between 100 and 110 mph.” This gives fans seated 60 feet away from home plate as little as four-tenths of a second to react to errant balls. Goldbloom sat approximately 134 feet from home plate, according to Savoy.