

# The Fun Times

Your Guide to Amusement Industry Products and Services by Automated Batting Cages/J&J Amusements

Fall 2001

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## What happens now? RECESSION..!

*About the Author...*

*Richard "Court" Huish graduated from Brigham Young University with his Bachelor of Science Degree and from San Francisco State with an MBA. For approximately 18 years Court functioned as the General Manager/COO of Huish Family Fun Centers. During that time he was a key part of the management team that designed, created, operated and owned eight regional Family Entertainment Centers. After HFFC was sold, Court worked with Palace Entertainment (the purchasing entity) as the Executive V.P. of Operations and Business Development. Currently Court is involved with two different groups which own and operate Family Fun Centers in the Portland, Denver and Boise market. As a result of Court's lengthy employment in the amusement industry, he has been very active in many aspects for the industry. Court served on the Board of Directors of IAAPA (the industry's trade association), as well as serving for seven years on their FEC Committee (two years as the chairman). Court is also on the Board of Directors and an Officer of J&J Amusements (a recreational equipment manufacturing firm) and is an Officer of Parlor Enterprises, which franchises "Bullwinkles" Family Restaurants and "Farrells" Ice Cream Parlors.*

Some of our worst fears have been recognized. After years of an expanding and prosperous economy, it appears we are now in an "official" recession. Not only do we face a recession, but because of the uncertainty associated with the terrorist attacks, America is moving into previously uncharted waters. For many of us, now is the time to look back in history for reassurance and lessons that we can apply to our current situation. While we have seen the economy fluctuate many times in the past, the events of this recession differ from anything we have ever seen. Even so, we can formulate rough ideas about what to

expect for our industry over the next year.

1. First we should count our blessings. While this human and economic tragedy is horrible and unfortunate, for our industry the timing was good. Summer is over (money in the bank), school is in session (so our customer counts are naturally declining,) and winter is just around the corner (which is already the slowest time of the year).

Hopefully with the government and fed working together to manipulate both fiscal and monetary policy we will see a turn around by spring and our individual parks cash flow won't be affected too badly.

2. There are a lot of people losing their jobs and consumer confidence is way down, which means people's wallets will be closed and spending on nonessential items will be cut back. But wait, isn't recreational fun and finding an escape an essential for all of us? I believe it is and while the "big ticket" recreational expenses (such as Disney World, Sea World, etc.) may be eliminated or cut way back, I think the FEC industry can count on continuing visits from our local patrons which should mean increased sales.

3. Higher gas prices should mean families staying closer to home; airplane travel is going to be down due to price increases, delays and inconveniences. This all should translate into more people staying around home and not traveling as much. More "stay at home families" could very easily mean more local recreation opportunities for them and possibly increased sales for the FEC industry.

4. The attack on the World Trade Center was meant to disrupt and affect many people. Terrorists are looking to create the biggest bang possible. For that reason, people should be concerned about attending any event or gathering that could involve a lot of people. I look at the larger amusement parks and think that they have the greatest exposure to some sort of attack. On the other hand, most Family Fun Centers are small in comparison and don't have the capacity to attract anyone's attention. For this reason, I believe we will be able to fill a void for the

(See Recession...page 2)

## HOW TO CONTACT THE FUNTIMES

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The Funtimes welcomes all readers written comments, questions, and suggestions regarding any aspect of the Newsletter. We reserve the right to edit your letter and all letters must include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Direct all correspondence (by mail or electronically) to Letters to the Editor.

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*(Recession...Continued from cover)*

families looking to spend time together but not wanting to risk exposure to possible terrorist action. Again I believe we could see our sales go up as a result of these fears.

5. Over the last few days we have seen many of the core values (patriotism, charity, love) that have made America GREAT come to the forefront of our lives. I think that many Americans have refocused their priorities and are not taking for granted a lot of what they have and enjoy. In times of tragedy we look to our families and loved ones, we are thankful for the love we share and we reevaluate what is important. I think that the recommitment to these kinds of values, and priorities could also result in

increased sales as families all over America rediscover each other and spend more time together. America is a wonderful place, and we are all part of a wonderful industry which provides enjoyment to people of all ages. It is easy for us to look at our nation's current situation and be gloomy or concerned about the future. But as I have pointed out above, we have a lot going for us. We should be prepared to make the most of it for each of our FEC's and the guests that visit them. We are their escape from some of this gloom; let's move ahead and provide them the best family entertainment in the world.

**God bless America.**

## Boondocks - Northglenn, Colorado

If you're on I-25 on the North side of Denver, you can't miss Boondocks Family Fun Center. With it's full scale replica of Utah's Arches National Park spectacular Delicate Arch sticking up out of the Bumper Boat pond, it's impossible to ignore. Guests have been coming in at a good clip since the Grand Opening in April. Among other attractions the park operates a 1200' track with 42 J&J karts, a 5000' pond with 16 J&J Blaster Boats (electric bumper boats), a kiddie track with 6 J&J Kidzkarts and an ABC Batting Range system with 7 pitching stalls. 2 Mini Golf Courses and Laser Tag round out the mix. They'll continue operating right through the Winter with their indoor attractions and use some of the outdoor concessions if the weather allows.



*Stuart Hersh, General Manager-  
Boondocks, Northglenn*

Park design and construction was done by Select Development of Meridian ID., and is the second park they have built with the Delicate Arch replica.

# Versatility in a kart...The Spartan

By Eric Hahl



accomplish such a task?", you ask. I'll break it down for you.

First, we started from scratch. We have a great chassis for our other go-karts but we needed something different for the Spartan. We needed a chassis that had bolt-on replaceable parts -for instance, the front bumper corner brackets.

These brackets have been designed to be replaced in the event they have been damaged.

Previous go-kart chassis designs would have your mechanic straightening the frame with a hammer or torch, possibly both. The bolt-on replaceable parts can be changed in no time and help get your go-kart back where it belongs...the track.

The standard Spartan comes with the stock Honda fuel tank and 5.5hp Honda motor. Sure, the karts are fuel efficient but you may need a longer range or more power. How about adding a 9.0hp motor and up to two 3 gallon fuel tanks for a total fuel capacity of six gallons! With that kind of capacity you are sure to have a kart that brings in dollars mile after mile.

The Spartan also comes standard with a molded plastic racing seat...take it a step further with the custom fit seat cushion and cover.



**versatile** \Ver"sa\*tile\, a. [L. versatilis, fr. versare to turn around, v. freq. of vertere: cf. F. versatile. See Verse.]

1. **Capable of being turned round.** --Harte.

2. Liable to be turned in opinion; **changeable; variable;** as versatile disposition.

3. **Turning with ease from one thing to another; readily applied to a new task, or to various subjects; many-sided;** as, versatile genius; a versatile politician.

Conspicuous among the youths of high promise . . . was the quick and versatile [Charles] Montagu. -- Macaulay.

4. (Nat. Hist.) **Capable of turning; freely movable;** as, a versatile anther, which is fixed at one point to the filament, and hence is very easily turned around; a versatile toe of a bird.

5. **Spartan Go-kart. See J&J Amusements.**  
-- Ver"sa\*tile\*ly, adv. -- -- Ver"sa\*tile\*ness, n.

Now that you have read the dictionary meaning of versatile, you can begin to comprehend J&J's go-kart, the Spartan.

Designed from the beginning to be...well, versatile, the Spartan go-kart rises to the challenge of being the most, um, er, versatile go-kart ever produced. "How did J&J

Want a race car style look and feel? Not a problem for the Spartan. Just add our racing slicks and rear wing! These simple bolt-on parts dramatically change the appearance and appeal of the Spartan, making your customers feel like real Formula 1 race drivers! **Watch out Michael Schumacher, here comes the J&J Spartan!**

# BUMPERBOAT SAFETY ISSUES

## The Runaway Bumper Boat

By Leon Wilbanks

Over the years we tend to THINK we have encountered every conceivable situation involving the ride. But, as they say, "Not so fast my friend" there is always something that comes along to amaze even the most jaded observer. Let's review some of the areas that are the most prevalent safety concerns and steps we can take to avoid incidents. For the most current safety information go to our web site [www.jjamusements.com](http://www.jjamusements.com). It is all there 24/7/365.

1. Burn hazards. This is the single largest cause of claims involving the ride (gasoline powered but electric's do have some exposure, more on electric's later). Not having heat guards in place, not checking the water pump operation on BF2A motors daily (see bulletin on the web). On Electric motors poor connections or shorted wires cause a high resistance which can cause a potential for fire. Always check wiring and connections daily. See the bulletins pertaining to this.

Recently I received a call from a customer saying he had several burn claims and the state inspector was shutting down his ride, I went through a series of questions and as we discussed the situation it came to light that he did not have our product, it was a competitor's, so obviously this is a problem not unique to J&J. Be alert, make the daily check sheet mandatory and these incidents can be avoided.

2. Propeller guards and water clarity; while the number of incidents is quite low they can be serious. In fact the only known fatality involving a Bumper Boat ride occurred in South Carolina when a young girl fell overboard and her clothing became entangled in the propeller. The water clar-

ity was poor and attendants could not see where she was. The message here is obvious, make sure guards are in place and in good condition. Make sure water is clear, avoid dyeing the water because of this situation. If you have a problem with algae or water quality a good local pool company can help you get back on track. We have excellent articles in past Fun Times Newsletters on this subject and again check the web site or call us for information.

In the spring of 2000, I had occasion to be in mediation on a lawsuit and while there visited a customer location. The park had a Bumper Boat pond, and while the pond water was fine the propeller guards had been removed! In their zeal for increased performance they had exposed themselves to a horrific risk. Do not do this, bad things will happen, it is just a matter of when.

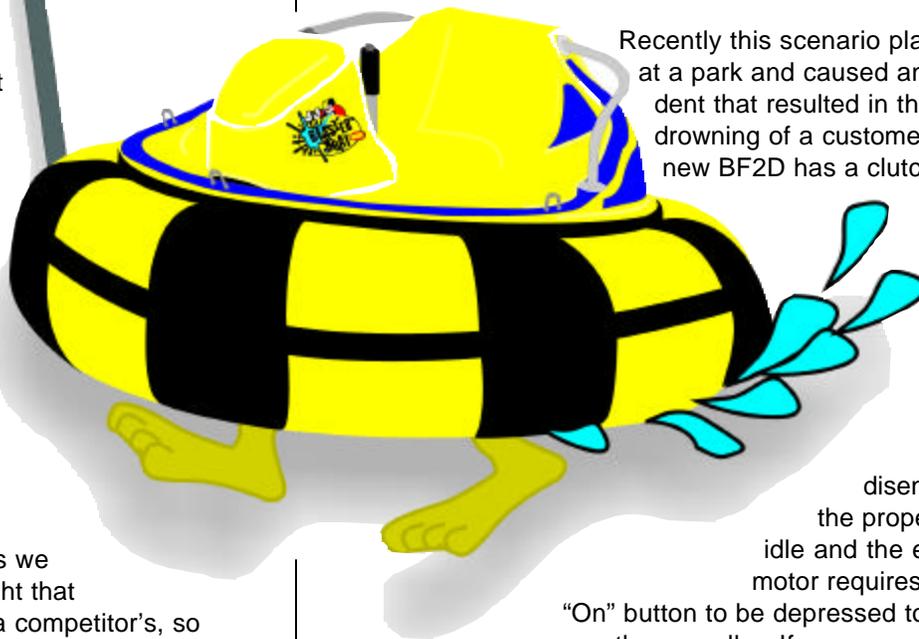
3. The title of this article alludes to the "Runway Boat". This is a highly dangerous situation brought about by poor design or unauthorized modification to the original ride. Some older Bumper Boats had no means by which the driver could control the throttle. The motor is started by the attendant, and the throttle lever moved to the full on position. The driver steers the boat but the throttle setting is static. A problem arises when the driver purposely jumps in the water (yes they do that) or accidentally falls overboard. At this point the boat is still running wide open and can run over the person(s) in the water.

Recently this scenario played out at a park and caused an incident that resulted in the near drowning of a customer. The new BF2D has a clutch that

disengages the propeller at idle and the electric motor requires the

"On" button to be depressed to engage the propeller. If you own motors of the non throttle control type, I would advise adding a throttle control or consider getting different motors and/or boats. Make sure attendants are trained in CPR and keep scissors or a cutting instrument handy just in case.

The Bumper Boat ride is one of the least problematic in the modern day fun park. With a good maintenance, training programs and a common sense approach your exposure is minimal. Be careful, have fun, make money.



# SAFETY ISSUES

## BATTING HELMETS WITH FACEMASKS!

*By Dick Hall*

For the past ten years, ABC has had as an "ABC Operational Safety Standard", the requirement that all "batters MUST wear helmets with face mask protection". ABC only sells helmets equipped with facemasks. It should be no surprise that the potential for injury to a batter's face is the most serious type of injury in the batting cages. How these batters get hit in the face is often a mystery. We have heard of instances where the batter is standing on home plate. But regard-

less of how this happens, batters wearing facemask protection will not be injured as seriously as they would without it, period!

We have spoken to many operators that don't use facemasks. These operators say that their customers don't like them. That is not an excuse not to use them. We own and operate four batting ranges. We use only helmets with facemasks at every location. Do customers complain?

Yes. Do we still insist that they wear them? Yes! (The simple explanation is that our insurance company requires that they wear them). I don't

remember any of them walking way and not hitting balls. Ask yourself how much money you lose by insisting that batters use facemasks. I would guess a few hundred dollars each year. When we factor in the cost of one serious injury (our deductible), it simply makes sense.

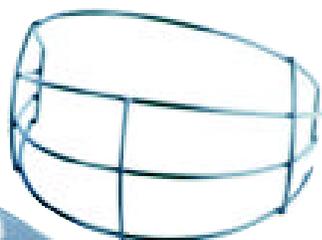
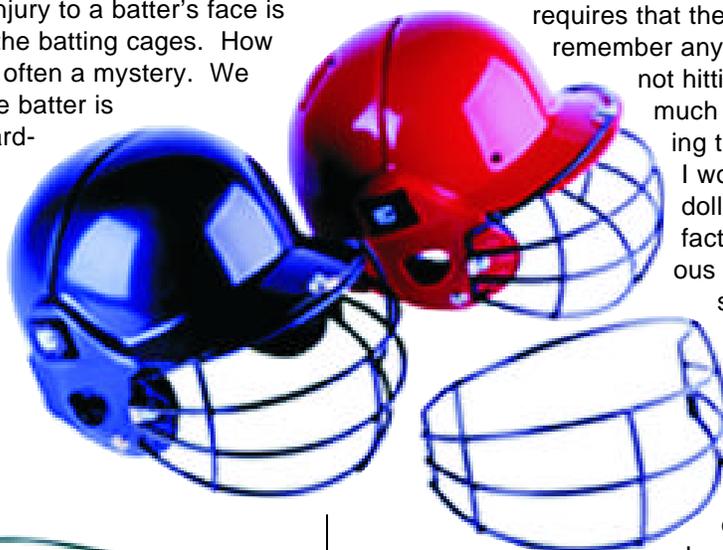
Batting helmets with facemasks are NOT mandatory in any organized league that I am aware of. I noticed only a handful of Little

League players using them

during the recent World Series. I am not aware of any other commercial batting range equipment manufacturer that requires the facemasks as an Operational Safety Standard. In the twenty-five plus years that I have been in the batting range business I am aware of fewer than twenty cases of batters being struck in the face with a baseball.

That is a remarkable fact! I estimate that all of the ABC equipped batting cages in the year 2001 will pitch approximately one billion balls! The number of balls pitched over the past twenty-five years is anyone's guess-it's a lot of balls! Twenty or less accidents involving accidents to the face is AMAZING! HOWEVER, we are also aware of another amazing fact. Many people in our society like to SUE! All of us are aware of this fact of life and we have seen our share of ridiculous lawsuits and claims. For no other reason, it is justification to require the facemask standard. But also keep in mind, these facemasks provide protection to people that may not be ball players, are being foolish or for any other unforeseen reason put themselves in danger.

**If you don't have facemasks, GET THEM! They are good business!**

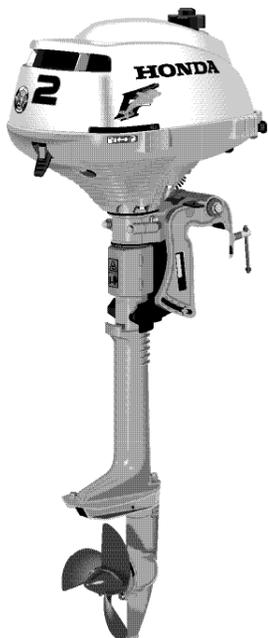


## Fun Park Parts

By Dan Hansen

### Who Are We?

Fun Park Parts is part of J&J Amusements, Inc. The worlds foremost Go-Kart and Bumper Boat manufacturer. Fun Park Parts has a mission to give Amusement Parks, Family Entertainment Centers, Mini Golf and Go-Kart Tracks the best selection of replacement parts possible. At Fun Park Parts or Online at FunParkParts.com, we make it fast, easy and cost effective to order by phone, fax, e-mail or online. While our customer base and product offerings have grown considerably and continue to grow, we still maintain our founding commitment to customer satisfaction.



### What We Offer:

Today, Fun Park Parts and FunParkParts.com will only distribute or manufacture the highest quality products. We have a large selection, including go-kart tires, hubs, bumper boat tubes, axles, Honda engines, cleaning supplies, decal's, pool supplies and banners. Utilizing the latest technology, CAD Design, Lasers, CNC and Robotic Welding gives us the ability to make custom parts for just about anything.

**HONDA**  
**ENGINES**

In addition, Fun Park Parts has partners that share the same values we do: high quality and incredible customer service.

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www.funparkparts.com

## Elevation Control

Following in the footsteps of our most recent innovation, Select-A-Pitch, the new ABC Elevation Control System is now available. Two separate control units for right and left hand hitters allow the user to adjust the pitching height. The Elevation Control will be used primarily for baseball machines, but can also be utilized for fast pitch softball machines. The system uses a "step" method. Every depression of the up or down button will move the pitch approximately 6" in the desired direction. The location of the pitch is displayed by our patented row of indicator lights. The system will easily install with new cages having the new low voltage conduit runs. For retrofits on existing cages, new cables between the coin box and light box must be installed. **Call ABC for details.**



## Automated Batting Cages TECH TALK

### Ball Count

The various service calls received throughout the year are reviewed by the ABC Customer Service Department. We look at the frequency of specific problems to determine if any changes or improvements are necessary. In most cases the cause of service problems will not be faulty design or components, but normal wear and tear on the equipment. One problem that seemed prominent this past season was ball counting. This is generally an easy problem to cure due to the limited amount of causes. The Master Office Control Panel counts the balls, via the ball count micro switch, as they are pitched. It is a simple system. The processor sends a 5VDC current down the wire to the micro switch. The wires are connected to the micro switch in a "Normally Open" mode. In this mode you will view "high" or 5VDC between the two wires. As a ball rolls over the micro switch, this line voltage is pulled or touched to ground which creates a "low" or zero voltage reading. The cycle of "high" to "low" and back to "high" is the input the Master Panel recognizes as a ball. Removing the wires from the micro switch and striking them together will simulate this cycle. In virtually all cases a faulty ball count will be caused by a defective micro switch or wire that has been knocked loose or broken. For assistance in identifying and locating the problem, and determining the solution, please refer to the "Troubleshooting Guide", Section IV "Pitching Machine".

# TECHNIQUES

for your Batting Cage

After 15 years of managing and servicing batting cages, I have found that performing the following WINTERIZATION procedures will extend the life of your batting cage equipment. If you have any suggestions or concerns about our procedures, please call our Customer Service Department and we will be glad to assist you.

## DRAINAGE SUMP AREA

- 1) Turn off all electrical power to the sub panel located in pit area.
- 2) If using an electric powered sump pump drainage system, be sure that the power leading to the sump pump is left "ON" at all times.

## CONVEYOR SYSTEM

- 1) OPTIONAL: Remove fiberglass shroud then disconnect Conveyor System (belt, rack, pulleys, etc) from distributor hopper and place in a dry area out of inclement weather.

## NETTING SYSTEM

Protecting your netting system during the off season will require different techniques depending upon your winter weather. We have provided two methods. The first method should be used if heavy, deep snow is a certainty during your winter months.

- 1) One method to protect your net and pipe structure is to un-tie the rope lanyard at every perimeter pole and let the net hang straight down from the net collar. By doing this, it allows any heavy snow load from tearing the net or bending the center pole and perimeter poles. **USE IF WINTER SNOW IS EXPECTED**

- 2) Another method that gives you a comfortable degree of safety and saves the job of pulling the net back up in the spring is as follows: At the top of each perimeter pole, tie a single piece of netting twine between the top horizontal rail and the metal net ring. Next un-tie the rope lanyard that typically holds the netting in place. This will hold the net in place, yet the single strand of twine would break loose under a heavy snow load. Upon opening in the spring you will need to re-tie the netting to the perimeter poles using heavier rope. **USE IF WINTER SNOW IS ONLY A POSSIBILITY, NOT DEFINITE.**

## PITCHING MACHINE & LIGHT BOX

- 1) Place plastic bag over all pitching machines, then ventilate the bottom of each bag either by leaving bottom of bag open or placing a 3 inch long plastic tube that has a 1 inch diameter hole. Tape the tube with the bag to the machine post.
- 2) Remove light boxes and place in a covered area away from direct weather. Cover up any bare wiring and place away from flooding levels.

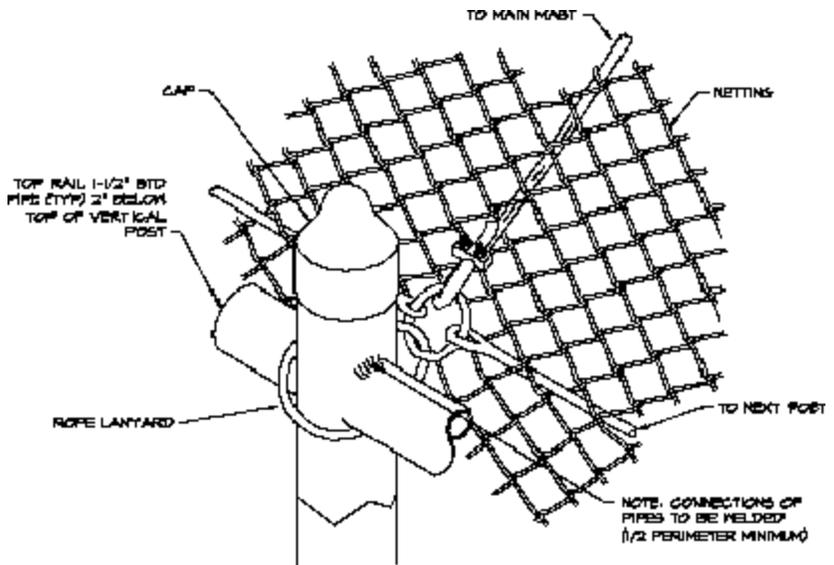
## COIN BOX & MICRO-PROCESSOR

- 1) Place plastic bag over all coin boxes, then ventilate the bottom of each bag either by leaving bottom of bag open or placing the 3 inch long plastic tube, then taping the tube with the bag to the machine post.
- 5) Unplug Master Control Panel power cord from outlet and remove all processor cards located in the middle of Master Control Panel, then place cards in a safe and dry place. **Remember where they are stored!**

**NOTE: If you have any questions before winterizing please call ABC's Customer Service Department for questions. 1-800-578-2243**



By Jim Peper



# ATTENTION



Due to the recent events affecting all of America and the World, ABC and J&J Amusements are now requiring all return items and mail to have your full return address clearly marked on the outside of the package. ABC and J&J will not open any suspicious mail or packages. If your return address is not clearly marked we cannot be held responsible for not opening your package or mail.

The ownership and staff of ABC and J&J would also like to express our sincerest condolences for those effected by the events of September 11th, 2001.

**BATTINGCAGES<sup>DOT</sup>COM**



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