

TESTED

Swing, Batter

Which bats work best?
The Brooklyn Bulldogs decide.

BY SARAH BERNARD

GONE ARE THE days of simply grabbing a banged-up Louisville Slugger and heading to the sandlot. Little League-appropriate bat specs now vary depending on kids' ages and playing levels, with a debate raging over the relative safety of wood versus metal bats. Wood advocates argue that metal hits harder and is unsafe for pitchers, who can be knocked flat by line drives. Converts say metal bats are lighter, easier to swing (especially for the littlest Little Leaguers), and less likely to shatter. The current options are dizzying: Metal bats can be double or single walled,

covered in tattoo-like graphics, and made of materials more often associated with airplanes; wood bats are equally aerodynamic and are constructed out of maple, or even bamboo, more often than classic ash. Then there are hybrids, with a wood core surrounded by a fiberglass shell. How do they hit? We asked the Brooklyn Bulldogs, the 12U traveling team of the 78th Precinct Youth Council, to sample a selection of 2009 models during a Thursday-afternoon batting practice and pick their favorites.



Brandon Leftwich, 11,
center field

PICK: EASTON REFLEX

"It has a lot of pop to it. If you don't get a lot of contact, the ball still goes far. And orange goes with the jersey."



Milo Sklar, 12,
utility

PICK: CTG ATHLETICS VERDERO WOODY JUNIOR

"It's light for a wood bat, and you don't feel any sting."



Joe Fernando, 12,
shortstop

PICK: EASTON CYCLONE

"It's evenly weighted—not top-heavy—which gives you an easy swing. I'm a contact hitter. Singles and doubles."



Ian Miller, 12,
second base

PICK: RAWLINGS TRIUMPH

"You don't have to swing that hard to get power."



Dennis Maddocks, 12,
pitcher

PICK: EASTON STEALTH

"I like it because the barrel is big. When I tried it, I hit a home run."



Mark Maguire, 13,
catcher

PICK: EASTON RAMPAGE

"This is two and a quarter inches—I usually use two and five-eighths—but it has a good grip, and it's long, which is good if you get an outside pitch."



Nick Dulchin, 12,
pitcher

PICK: EASTON STEALTH

"The ball pops off it more than the other ones."



Avery Hogue, 12,
right field

PICK: MATTINGLY BEAST

"The grip is unique. It helps your knuckles align, and you get a better grip without squeezing the tape."



Daniel Baket, 11,
third base

PICK: MIZUNO MZM271

"I like a nice old-fashioned wood bat. I like the color and the smooth handle. I wear batting gloves, so tape doesn't do anything for me."

Adrian Eacker, 12,
left field

PICK: EASTON TYPHOON

"It's nice and light, which gives you good bat speed. I'm not a power hitter—walks and singles mostly—so I like a quick bat."

The Starting Nine

Our Little Leaguers' top picks.

METAL



Easton Rampage, \$59.99



Rawlings Triumph, \$49.99



Easton Typhoon, \$49.99



Easton Reflex, \$69.99



Easton Stealth, \$199



Mattingly Beast, \$229.99



Easton Cyclone, \$29.99

WOOD



Mizuno MZM271, \$49.99

HYBRID



CTG Athletics, Verdero Woody Junior, \$99

All bats available at Modell's (1535 Third Ave., nr. 86th St.; 212-996-3800; modell.com).