



Only in Indiana: Beep ball brings fun for visually impaired athletes

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By Kevin Rader, WTHR political reporter [Connect](#)

INDIANAPOLIS - You may not realize it, but the World Series is currently being played in Rochester, New York and Indiana has a team participating.

"One, two, three, Thunder!" the team exclaims.

If only the game of baseball and softball were that easy. For the longest time, the boys and girls of summer who had visual impairment could only dream of playing America's sport. Now technology has finally caught up to them.

"Here we go. Ready hit. Nice job, Eric," Darnell Booker calls to his players. Booker is the general manager of the [Indianapolis Thunder](#) and he also serves as the team's pitcher.

It hardly seems possible but a visually impaired hitter can hit the ball to a visually impaired fielder, but the game is on.

"The ball is a 16 softball that has a speaker inside. The ball randomly beeps and it beeps throughout the game," Booker proclaims as he shows us the ball.

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The hitter uses the cue from the pitcher and the sound of the ball to try to make contact. The fielders hear the sound of the ball after it is struck. Spotters yell out a zone and the player in the zone tries to pick up that ball before the batter gets to base.

"The batter will come up and they will ask, 'can I get a base check, please? Here is first base and here is third base,'" Booker explains as he holds a device that emits a sound signifying each base, and where players are told to run to.

A base operator will randomly chose which base the batter should run to and activate the base sound accordingly.

"It is real challenging for me. I'm getting better each year. I'm having a hard time tracking the ball," 54-year-old Chip Arbogast says. He started to lose his eyesight at the age of 26 and readily admits the game is difficult. But he is thrilled to be playing again.

"I am so stoked that I am playing ball again. I played when I was a kid and I was awesome, so I love it. I am 54 and I am throwing myself around out there like a kid and I love it," he continues.

[Visit the Thunder's website.](#)

Meanwhile, 15-year-old Eric Rodriguez, who is sitting just to the left of Arbogast on the bench for the interview, still is a kid.

"Here we go ready pitch. Batter is out. Nice job, Enron. Nice job, Eric," Booker hollers encouragement for his team after each play.

"At first it was kind of scary I was like, 'how is this going to work?' But once I got out there I realized this was not as hard as it seemed. You just adjust and once you get used to it, it's second nature, pretty much," Rodriguez says.

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It doesn't take long to notice they players don't wear gloves. But they do wear blindfolds.

"The blindfold does not matter if you are blind or visually impaired. You have to wear it so the playing field is equal. There are different variations of blindness, so everybody plays the sport equally," Booker explains.

So more times than not, you literally have the blind leading the blind. But in this case, they're going all the way to [Beep Ball World Series](#).

"We wanted to make sure that we help you guys get to the World Series, so we are here to donate \$1,500," Marty Posch from the Finish Line Youth Foundation says as the team hoots and hollers its support.

Corporate Indianapolis has helped step forward to make this possible. Twenty-four teams

in all will vie for the crown.

"We are going to try to bring the trophy and World Series. Everybody is playing for World Series rings too, so we are trying to bring this trophy back to Indy," Booker proclaims.

Everyone likes the sound of that.

[Check to see how the Thunder fared!](#)

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