

Benefits of Bat Compression Testing ©

June 1, 2016 – Art Eversole

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In our senior softball game, we don't require onsite bat testing at tournaments as is the case of many USSSA and ASA tourneys. Our senior bats are tested and certified by an independent third party using a scientific method that is not to exceed a 1.21 BPF. When a bat is approved through this testing process only then will the bat be stamped with the official SSUSA certification logo.

Why then would seniors even be interested in bat barrel compression testing? Compression testing of senior bats can tell you a lot about the current performance and life expectancy of your favorite stick. Our hitting club in the Seattle area (SEATAC Hitting) has access to a bat compression tester on a frequent basis for our membership.

Typically only a team's sponsor, a league, or a hitting club with a high membership will spend the money to make the pricey purchase for a tester. We use a G4 SSL tester that came with a sticker price of \$850 for the unit.

The intended purpose of a bat tester is to establish how much a bat barrel compresses for the game of softball or baseball. There is a direct relationship between the bat barrel compression readings to the bat's performance. The lower the compression reading the better the bat will perform or the more the bat barrel will trampoline creating greater ball exit speed.

Understand that USSSA and ASA have compression standards that disallow bats for use in tournaments and league play if they exceed their established

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standards. I believe that for USSSA bat testing they can't go below the 220lbs minimum; as for ASA it might be at 250lbs.

Organization and association standards can vary from year to year. We seniors are fortunate to be able to use bats with compression readings lower than those of USSSA and ASA thereby adding a bit more energy to our hits.

The bat compression tester is completely portable and does not require power. Our onsite expert in SEATAC is Brett Kreuger or as his teammates call him Kreugs. He is a member of the powerful Doerflinger/Demarini 50's Major-Plus ballclub from Olympia, Wash. Kreuger has the experience and knowhow to test our bats safely and accurately. Note that there is a USSSA tester model and also an ASA model; we use the USSSA version.

Kreugs' experience in the testing of senior bats has shown that a senior bat still in the wrapper typically starts out between 230lbs to 250lbs compression on average (USSSA and ASA bats are well over the 300lbs marker in the wrapper).

As more swings are placed on a senior bat the compression readings go down slowly and until they reach approximately the 175lbs value and is then considered to be game ready. Senior bat readings that test near the 150lbs mark are considered to be at the end of their useful life and could crack with the next contact.

Bats that test out at extremely low values like 115lbs-120lbs are kaput. With these low readings you may find either a visible break on the exterior shell or that an internal layer has been compromised, making the bat useless.

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Bat tester operation:

First insert your bat head through the 2.5" diameter hole in the frame until the end of the barrel touches the reference rod.

Next place the cylindrical dowel under the handle of the bat to make it so the bat is level with the machine for more accurate testing.

By rotating the instrument dial apply a preload that brings the indicator dial so it's calibrated @ zero.

Make sure the cam lever is in the full down/vertical position. It's necessary to test the bat in at least two or more barrel locations to see if the bat is breaking in evenly. As we all know it's paramount to rotate the bat when taking bp to insure an even break in around the circumference of the bat barrel.

Lastly, compress the barrel by pulling the cam lever to the up/horizontal position until the lever locks in place and read the dial (see pics).

Knowing your bat's current trampoline/compression reading will help you to know when to let a teammate take a few swings or not with your prized possession. "I'm sorry Bob, but my bat just tested out at its maximum performance reading and is going into my bat bag as game only use."

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Here's a link to the G4 SSL bat tester machines:

<http://www.barrelcompression.com/purchase.html> (no longer available, use <https://www.barrelcompression.com/bat-testers>).

