

South Shore Hospital Doctor Volunteers for Visually-Impaired Baseball Team in Boston

By Kristen Perfetuo, News and Information Officer

On a Wednesday evening in late June, Michael Marciello, MD, performs a typical evaluation on a 40-year-old baseball player. As a physiatrist at South Shore Health System's Spine Center, Dr. Marciello assesses the athlete's injury, gives his diagnosis, and recommends the best course of action to get the player back to health.

This encounter - on this particular day - seems no different than any other. But it is different.

Marciello isn't in his office. Instead, Marciello is fulfilling his duties as the volunteer team doctor and hitting instructor for the Boston Renegades, an adaptive baseball/softball team for visually-impaired adults.

"Before I even start talking about hitting with the team I have to check out all the bumps and bruises from the last practice," Marciello said. "It's a pretty intense sport."

Marciello's involvement with the Boston Renegades began five years ago when he read a story about the team in *The Boston Globe*. Diagnosed with a visual impairment that causes loss of color vision, the doctor who adores baseball was immediately intrigued by the team. Beep baseball involves players who are legally blind or visually impaired. To make sure everyone is on a level playing field, both the batter and the fielders must wear blindfolds at all times. The ball is equipped with a "beeping" mechanism that allows the batter to know when to hit the ball and helps players in the field know where the ball is to field it. The field is set up with a first base and third base (there is no second base in Beep baseball) about 100 yards away from home plate. The bases also have a beeping mechanism so the batter knows where to run once the ball is hit. If the batter reaches the "beeping" base before the ball is secured by the fielding team, the offense earns a run. If the ball is secured it's an out. (*Watch this video to learn more about Beep baseball [here!](#)*).

After Marciello assesses the health of the team he moves on to hitting stations, where he does one-on-one drills with his players. Rob Dias, 40, of Somerville, works with Marciello on the intricacies of hitting. Rob places his hand on the back of Marciello's knee to get a feel for how he loads up and prepares to drive towards the ball with his lower half. Rob then feels how Marciello's shoulders rotate during the swing, hoping to pick up a tip on how to better hit the ball when he is at bat.

"You can tell he's passionate about the sport and he's passionate about seeing the girls and guys improve," said Dias. "He's a constant here."

Marciello will travel with the team to the World Series in Wisconsin from July 29 to August 5, where the Renegades will look to take home a title. He'll be the first to tell you that baseball has always been his first love. The Renegades are now his second.

"Beep baseball gives visually-impaired adults an outlet to be on a team and play a sport, something they were probably told many times wasn't going to be possible," said Marciello. "It's just so fun to be a part of....I never want to let go of the game."

To learn more about the Boston Renegades visit: blindcitizens.org.



Michael Marciello, MD, works on hitting with Rob Dias, who is visually impaired and a member of the Boston Renegades.