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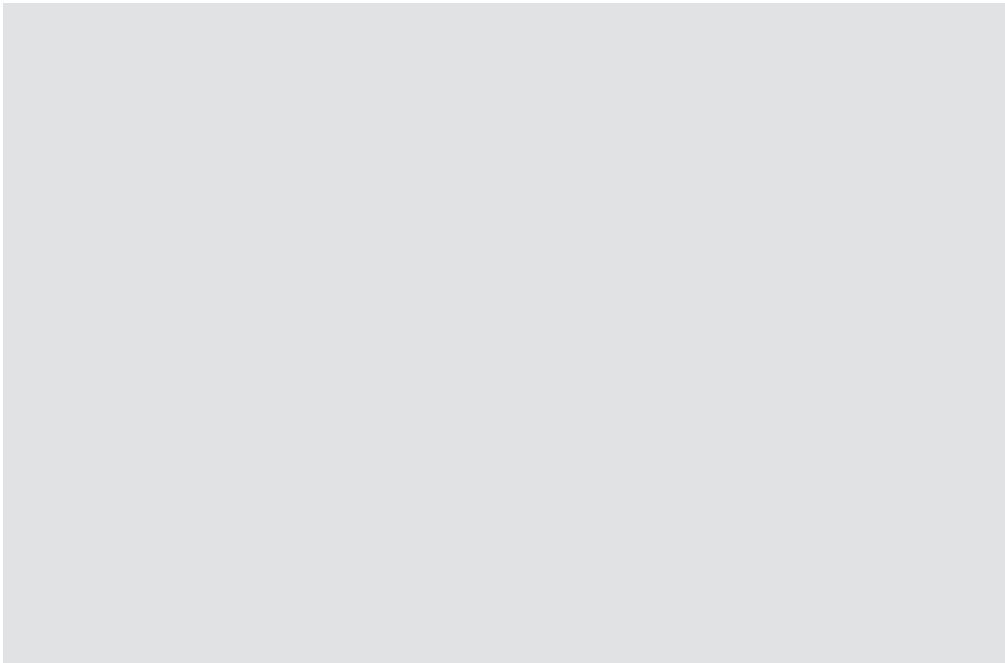
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Airsoft Guns: A Double-Edged Sword

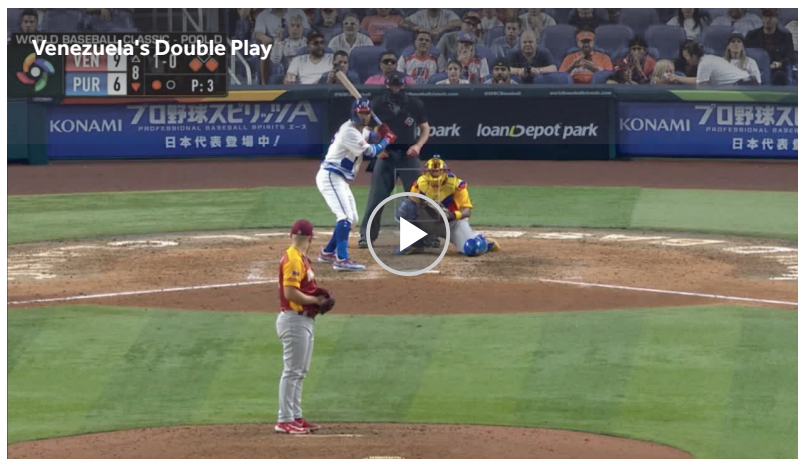
MATTHEW GILMARTIN
AUGUST 11, 2008



Airsoft guns are one of the most controversial areas of sporting equipment on the market.

They can be mistaken for real guns easily. The only distinguishing characteristic between an airsoft gun and a real gun is an airsoft gun's orange muzzle. But even this more noticeable muzzle can be very small and hard to see, and most of the time they are not required by law.

There are far more people who aren't knowledgeable about airsoft guns than people who are. That means that even with the occasional orange-tipped muzzle, onlookers who see kids pointing guns alone or with friends in their backyards probably will either not see it or not know what it means.



Nine times out of 10 that leads to a call to the cops and a huge, inconvenient misunderstanding.

I've heard that kids have jokingly pointed their airsoft guns at cops—at least, jokingly in their eyes—and the cops shot them because their guns didn't have the orange-tipped muzzle, making the cops think that they had real guns and they were a serious threat to the safety of others around them. Some kids have probably died that way.

I've heard another specific story about a young teenager holding a girl hostage because he was holding an airsoft gun and she thought he had a real one, likely because the gun had no orange-tipped muzzle. The boy held the girl hostage for hours until the situation was somehow resolved.



But in spite of the possible danger involved, I understand why airsoft gun owners go without the orange tips unless they have to have them: to make the gun look like the real thing because it's more "in."

Orange sticks out on a black-and-silver gun, and it's really ugly. Black is cool, respectable, and sleek. Orange makes you seem like a beginner. Black gives the impression that you're a marksman.

Given the possible dangers at hand, the thing that bewilders me is that many places do not have laws against removing or painting over the orange tips. That does nothing to make the use of airsoft guns more safe.

As unattractive as those stupid orange-tipped muzzles are, keep them on for your safety and the peace of others around you.

There's also the dangers involved in fighting airsoft wars. The rounds are made of hard plastic and are sold in sizes up to .25 grams in diameter. Airsoft guns can shoot these

rounds at velocities up to 450 feet per second (the legal limit).



While this may not seem dangerous, it can be enough to crack the skin and cause minor bleeding. Some airsoft guns can even cause more damage than their brethren, paintball guns—which have to shoot at higher velocities because of the greater size of their rounds. Paintball guns have been known to cause welts from being shot with them.

But beyond all the risks and dangers associated with airsoft guns, there is also a really fun aspect to them. They look and behave exactly like real guns so that it feels like you're firing a real gun. But you don't deal with the life-threatening danger of bullet-firing real guns.

Plus they're a great, safer alternative to real guns for teenagers who shouldn't be shooting them yet. I imagine it's a lot of fun to shoot airsoft guns with your friends in the backyard. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why young boys like them so much.

But no matter what, airsoft guns are—and will continue to be—one of the most controversial areas of sports equipment on the market.

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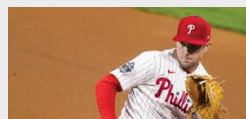
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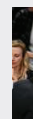
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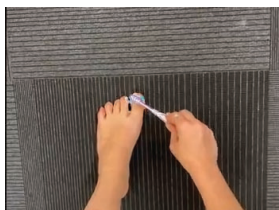


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