

Equipment, Do's and Don'ts.

by "Biker" Bob Hills of www.NJPaintball.com

New players to the game, often known as "Newbie", have a tendency to bog themselves down with unnecessary items. Lets face it; the only thing on your mind is "When do I get to shoot some one?" This of course is the basic premise of the game.

As far as I am concerned SAFETY is the number one issue. There are some items you need to carry with you to help your performance in the game and at the same time give you full protection. I always tell people who are interested in starting in paintball to consider purchasing 3 things before they get a gun.

The single most important item is a good **goggle/facemask**. The cost is somewhere between \$40.00 - \$80.00, depending on the brand. There are many varieties out there, some good and a lot bad!

A goggle/facemask needs to be comfortable with a lot of padding. You'll be spending a lot of time in it. There should be a firm foam seal around your eyes without any visible gap. This means the goggle part goes across your forehead above your eyebrows, around the sides of your eyes, across your cheek and around the bridge of your nose.

The facemask part should also be firm plastic that wraps around the back of your head, covers your chin, and all the way past your ears. This should be plastic, not rubber and should be slightly bendable but not to the point that you can fold it. The facemask should be part of the goggle, not one that can be totally removed and used as a separate system. That type can often separate during a game and leave you exposed to being shot in the face or eyes. Unfortunately this is the most common goggle/facemask found at paintball fields for rent. Main reason, they are inexpensive to replace.

The lenses should be a thermal/double pane type to help avoid fogging during humid days. A good fan system also works wonders to prevent fogging. You can now get fans for about \$30.00. I also prefer a goggle that gives me a full vision range, usually 220 degrees of visibility. This way I don't have to move my head as much and take a chance someone sees me moving around.

There's nothing worse than being in the middle of the field and not being to see anything because of fogging. Remember, you should never take your goggles off for ANY reason when playing. Paintballs are dumb. They only go where you shoot them and often they don't even do that! This means even though you think you are safe a paintball could still come flying over the hill or through a bush and get you right in the face. Its not worth losing an eye for.

An additional important piece of equipment to invest in is **full shin & knee guards**. Often you spend a fair amount of time on the ground in a kneeling position during a game. Or you are running and then find yourself ducking for cover. A lot of times you end up falling on your knees and gouging them into rocks or tree roots. This is a type of pain that can take your breath away! I remember times where I sat out the game because I

just wasn't able to move, it hurt that much! I ended up buying a 1-piece system that was made of neoprene, a thick foam rubber. Believe it or not, my game really improved after that. It's amazing what you can do when you're not in pain! If you don't have time to get a set of kneepads, consider renting them from the equipment shack. Avoid using the hard plastic type like as used in motor cross or hockey. This restricts your ability to run or get up quickly. But, if that all you have, it's better than nothing. The cost for this type of protection is around \$30.00. It's cheaper than a trip to the hospital for an X-Ray...

Play Smart, Have Fun

Biker Bob, NJ Paintball Club Referee