



SPECIAL BULLETIN

Tug-of-War

June 2009

Students of a local high school were participating in a pep rally, where one of the events was a Tug-of-War with seniors competing against sophomores. There were approximately 15 students participating on each team. Shortly after the Tug-of-War began, the rope broke causing students on both sides to lose their balance and fall. As a result, two of the students sustained severe injuries including bone fractures, multiple abrasions, and lacerations. Both injured students required multiple surgeries to repair the damage, and will require additional surgeries to mitigate the scarring.

According to the Tug-of-War International Federation (TWIF) and the U.S. Tug-of-War Association (USATOWA) the following are recommendations for conducting an event:

- The rope should be made of natural materials, preferably natural manila, and should be about 1.5 inches in diameter. The diameter of the rope can be adjusted for the size of the participants (smaller diameter for younger children). The TWIF also states that while all synthetics fall short of natural manila, nylon is probably the worst choice. A stretched nylon rope can recoil like a rubber band if released or it breaks causing severe injury or worse. This is called “synthetic line snap back”. In addition, natural manila also absorbs sweat, so the surface doesn’t get slippery when it is in use.
- The rope should be long enough to accommodate all pullers to the win mark and have adequate slack behind the anchor person. Each puller needs 3 feet with the first puller, 12 feet from the win mark, plus 12 feet slack at each end. For 10 pullers, the rope should be $(12+30+12 \text{ feet}) \times 2$ for a length of 108 feet.
- Never make a loop by wrapping the rope around a hand to get a better grip. Looping the rope around the hands is extremely dangerous as it can make it almost impossible to let go. The rope should be held in a normal grip with the palms facing up and the fingers wrapped around the rope.

Whether working with young children or adults, game organizers should take time to go over the safety concerns with participants. Supervision is key!

For additional information and rules, please visit:

<http://usatowa.homestead.com>

<http://www.tugofwar-twif.org>