

The Record SHOPPING



BETH BALBIERZ/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

STOREFRONTS JugheadSports

107 Pleasant Ave. at Route 17
Upper Saddle River
(800) 282-4638
baseballclinics.com

Worth-the-trip rating:



Stores are rated on a scale of one to four cars — the more cars, the farther you should be willing to drive to check it out.

By ABIGAIL LEICHMAN
STAFF WRITER

If your New Year's resolution includes picking up a bat and ball, you may want to

peruse the \$1 million worth of baseball, softball and umpire equipment for sale at JugheadSports.

Before you go, though, take note that there is no sign for the shop as you drive up Route 17. It's tucked inside Professional Baseball Instruction, New Jersey's only full-time baseball school, which opened three years ago at the site of the former Speedway.

It's no secret that owner Doug Cinnella would love Jughead customers to sign up for a PBI clinic or camp. That's one reason he encourages them to try out equipment on the adjacent diamond before buying. But it's not his primary reason.

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JugheadSports: Play ball

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"Having the retail space next to the indoor field adds a whole new dimension to selling gear," says Cinnella, who played nine minor-league seasons and scouts for the Cincinnati Reds.

"You can sit in the batter's box and swing, put a helmet on and run around the bases. You can smell it, hold it, play with it, and then decide if you like it or not."

All the folks who sell equipment here know it and use it themselves. They'll determine the right bat and glove size for each customer, and they'll help parents find identical gear for different-size siblings to prevent squabbles.

The store carries Rawlings, Easton, Under Armour, Louisville Slugger, Mizuno, Pro Nine, Diamond Sports, Schutt, SSK and Wilson apparel and gear, Mizuno and Puma cleats and turf shoes, all in sizes youth XS to adult XXXL.

There is a large selection in every category, such as baseball pants in white, gray, black, blue

or black pinstripes and with colored piping.

Cinnella takes pains to learn everything he can about what he sells — he even flies to Rawlings headquarters in St. Louis for sales meetings — and passes it on to the rest of the staff.

But perhaps the greatest appeal of JugheadSports is its pricing and customer service. Prices here are set to match the lowest Internet prices available.

Among the 1,000 gloves for sale here is Rawlings' Heart of the Hide series — the one favored by Derek Jeter — for \$149. That's \$10 to \$20 below online prices.

And there are always deals on excess inventory, such as Rawlings Liquid Metal 2 bats, regu-

larly \$199, now \$75.

"If someone purchases a bat and something goes wrong, most stores instruct the customer to contact the company, but I tell them to come back to me," Cinnella says. "I'll replace that bat and deal with the company."

Team and league discounts are available.

Regular hours: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekends. Will close at 6 New Year's Eve, re-opening Monday.

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Have a Storefronts tip? Call (201) 646-4190 or e-mail janes@northjersey.com

