Preface by Claude Bouchard

It is an honor for me to be given the opportunity to contribute to this Festschrift recognizing the many accomplishments and the global legacy of Professor Robert M. Malina. Over the last 40 years, I have had the privilege of being able to observe from a front-row seat the numerous contributions made or spearheaded by Professor Malina, and this commentary is inspired by sustained contacts with him over these decades.

Anyone who has reviewed the curriculum vitae of RMM realizes that his research interests extend from human biology in the broad sense to exercise science, with a particular focus on growth and a variety of pediatric issues. His contribution to science spans a period of 50 years. He published his first research paper in 1962 in the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* (Rarick et al., 1962). Since then, he has contributed to the advancement of knowledge in areas as diverse as the morphological growth of children; motor development and motor skills across the growing years; maturation, including age at menarche; skeletal age; growth and sports performance; the risk factor profile for common chronic diseases in children; and the role of social, cultural and economic circumstances as seen in developed and developing countries on growth and maturation.

Robert M Malina has published almost 400 peer-reviewed research papers and about 300 book chapters, technical papers, book reviews and other reports. He has also written several monographs and books. His publications have been cited more than 7,600 times in the world literature.
INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an overview of the literature on the youth baseball player. I chose this topic for the Festschrift because aside from our interest in child growth, maturation and physical activity, Professor Malina and I share a passion for baseball and the study of the child and adolescent athlete. His interest in baseball stems from stickball and the New York City Police Athletic League; and mine from riding my bicycle with my baseball glove hanging from the handlebar looking for a neighborhood “pickup” game (on a related note, we have engaged in conversations of the lack of unstructured play among contemporary youth). We have both coached our sons’ youth baseball teams. Interestingly, he is a New York Mets fan, while I am a Yankees fan. It is likely that Professor Malina’s interest in the game of baseball influenced two of his first papers on throwing (Malina, 1968; 1969). Finally, it is perhaps fitting that I am writing this chapter in October – the month of the Major League Baseball playoffs and the World Series.