



Phil Noel/Connecticut Post

**On deck:** Gregory J. Battersby, vice president of sales and marketing, and Mark Candela, regional sales manager, check out the batting cage at ProBatter Sports in Milford. "We currently have 13 patents in the United States," Battersby says.

# PROBATTER UP!

## Milford-based company's pitching systems are a big hit

**WHAT:** ProBatter Sports is a 5-year-old company set to revolutionize the batting cage with its ProBatter computerized video pitching system. The ProBatter simulates real-life baseball pitching at any level — from 40 mph for Little Leaguers to 100 mph for Major League Baseball players. The former Norwalk business recently moved to a bigger, 6,000-square-foot location at 15 Old Gate Road in Milford. For more information, call 874-2500, or visit [www.probatter.com](http://www.probatter.com).

**WHO:** Kent Communications and Stahl Real Estate are the major financiers of ProBatter Sports, which is owned by patent lawyers Gregory J. Battersby and Charles W. Grimes, both of Stamford, and Gregg Wolpert, of Stahl Real Estate. "We currently have 13 patents in the United States and have pending patent applications in every country that plays baseball," said Battersby, a former baseball coach. Their product line includes the ProBatter Professional Series, ProBatter II, Professional Softball Simulator, Tunnels to Go, ProBatter Smart Card and ProBatter Scoring System. The private company has eight employees; they declined to reveal yearly sales.

**IT'S ELECTRO:** "ProBatter is a high-tech electromechanical system that delivers a pitch through a state-of-the-art projector," Battersby said. "It's a computer-controlled pitching machine that can throw any pitch a human can." The units are considered semipermanent and weigh around 600 pounds. Each system comes with a control



cabinet that houses a PC-based computer, a pitching head with wheels that delivers the pitch, a video screen with a live video image and projector and touch-control panel by home plate. "One feature that has really gotten into the marketplace is its sophisticated touch-control panel that is set up to work in three modes, which can be determined by the user," Battersby said.

**THREE MODES:** The ProBatter Professional series allows the batter to customize his pitch selection based on three programmable modes. "The first mode allows the batter to select on a pitch-by-pitch basis where he can control the type of pitch [fastball, sinker, cutter, splitter, curve, slider and change-up], speed [up to 100 mph], location of the pitch and the video image — full wind-up or stretch mode, and left-handed or right-handed pitcher," Battersby said. "The second mode can set up a sequence of pitches determined by the batter, or they can have the computer choose a random mode. The third mode is random, where each pitch will be different to simulate a game situation — a 92-mph fastball, 78-mph curve or change-up."

**BIG LEAGUE:** "Right now we have four major league clubs using the system: Boston Red Sox, Chicago White Sox, New York Mets and Cleveland Indians," said Battersby, who is going after colleges,

because there are only 30 major league clubs. "We also sold the system to some individual players like Trot Nixon of the Red Sox, who bought it a couple of seasons ago before his breakout season, and Jason Giambi of the Yankees just bought the system." Private players have had the system installed at their training facilities, but the company is also starting to sell home units. "We're doing a mass mailing to affluent areas where they have the money and space [60-foot run and 8-foot ceilings] to have the system installed." Former Mets manager Bobby Valentine bought the system and had it installed in Japan, where his team won the Japanese World Series. ProBatter series cost \$18,000 for ProBatter II to \$70,000 for ProBatter Professional.

**COMMERCIAL CAGES:** ProBatter's biggest clients remain commercial batting cages, which number more than 15,000 in the United States. "Batting cage owners can rent the system, and if they drop their pitches from 20 to 15 for the same price of \$2, they will cover the cost of the rental without losing any money," Battersby said. A new niche for the company is having commercial batting cages used by professional baseball clubs for their fans. "We have batting cages at Turner Field for the Atlanta Braves and Coors Field for the Colorado Rockies, where the fans are allowed to use the cage," Battersby said. "What's happening is kids go down to the cage and get to bat against a video image of the starting pitcher for that night."

— CHRISTINE COONEY