



2026 RULEBOOK

*The Friday night stars of tomorrow **LEARN** here.*

THE NEW RIVER VALLEY YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE IS A JOINT EFFORT BETWEEN THE TOWNS OF BLACKSBURG, CHRISTIANBURG, THE CITY OF RADFORD AND THE COUNTIES OF FLOYD, GILES, MONTGOMERY AND PULASKI'S PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENTS.

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PARKS & RECREATION ADMINTRATORS:

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Radford	Chuck Morris	540-731-3633	chuck.morris@radfordva.gov

MISSION STATEMENT:

Our mission is to provide a **positive, recreational football experience** where every participant can learn, grow, and enjoy the game. We are committed to teaching the **rules, fundamental techniques**, and **teamwork** essential to football, while promoting **sportsmanship**, confidence, and character throughout the season. Our league exists to create an encouraging environment where players can develop skills, build friendships, and have fun.

Practices can start **August 10, 2026**. Late sign-ups can only be added up to the Tuesday of the second week of practice. Official weigh-ins will be announced by your local jurisdiction. Any late sign-ups must be weighed before they can start practice. Any late sign-ups must participate in 3 practices of just conditioning before being issued pads and engaging in hitting/tackling. You may not conduct full pads practice until **August 17, 2026**, at the earliest, however, if you start practice later than August 10, 2026, you must have 1 week of conditioning before starting full pads practice.

LEAGUES OFFERED:

MITE LEAGUE: 2ND & 3RD GRADERS:

The Mite League consists of second and third graders in the upcoming 2026-2027 school year. **Participants cannot be 10 years of age before September 30, 2026.** The Mite League weigh limit is **90lbs and under**, any participant weighing over 91lbs or over at the time of the official weigh-in will receive an "X" on their helmet and be required to begin all plays on the field from a 3-point or 4-point stance on the offensive or defensive line. Any 3rd grader weighing over 90lbs may move up to junior league.

JUNIOR LEAGUE: 4TH & 5TH GRADERS:

The Junior League consists of fourth and fifth graders in the upcoming 2026-2027 school year. **Participants cannot be 12 years of age before September 30, 2026.** Junior League weight limit is **125lbs and under**, any participant weighing over 126lbs or over at the time of the official weigh-in will receive an "X" on their helmet and be required to begin all plays on the field from a 3-point or 4-point stance on the offensive or defensive line. *4th Graders weighing in at 59 pounds or under have the option of dropping back and playing in the Mite League but must play on the line and wear an "X" on their helmet.* Any 5th grader weighing over 125lbs may move up to senior league.

SENIOR LEAGUE: 6TH & 7TH GRADERS:

The Senior League of sixth and seventh graders in the upcoming 2026-2027 school year. **Participants cannot be 14 years of age before September 30, 2026.** No 8th graders are allowed regardless of age. Senior League weight limit is **150lbs and under**, any participant weighing over 151lbs or over at the time of the official weigh-in will receive an "X" on their helmet and be required to begin all plays on the field from a 3-point or 4-point stance on the offensive or defensive line. *6th Graders weighing in at 85 pounds or under have the option of dropping back and playing in the Junior League but must play on the line and wear an "X" on their helmet.*

MIDDLE SCHOOL POLICY:

A player in the Senior League may not play on a Middle School team. You must be rostered on one or the other but not both at the same time.

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TEAM REQUIREMENTS:

ADDRESS/SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ZONE:

To be placed on a NRV Youth Football team; a player must attend the public school district and/or physical address to corresponding recreation department. **If a player is homeschooled, placement will be determined based on their physical residence address.**

Players who attend school or reside in a district that does not have enough participants to field a team may be permitted to play in the next closest locality, **only if that locality has a need for additional players. The receiving locality reserves the right to accept or deny any out-of-district player.**

TEAM NUMBERS:

Mite and Junior teams that reach 36 or more players will be split into two teams. Senior teams will split into two teams at 40 players. Local recreation departments may split at an earlier number if so desired. A team must have a minimum of 15 players.

WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS:

NRV YOUTH FOOTBALL WEIGH-INS:

Weigh-ins will be done the first week of the season and be observed by a representative from another area. Weights, along with player's name, age, birthdate, grade, school and address will be entered into an official database only to be seen by area rec departments/football clubs upon request.

- Boys/girls in the **Senior Division** (6th & 7th Grades): weighing **150lbs.** or less at the time of the official weigh-in will be allowed to play in the backfield or carry the ball at any time. Players weighing **151lbs.** or more will be identified with an "X" on their helmet. These players must play down linemen and start in a 3-point or 4-point stance on offense or defense. A 6th grader that weighs in at 85lbs or less has the option of dropping back to the junior league but must play on the line and wear an "X" on their helmet.
- Boys/girls in the **Junior Division** (4th & 5th Grades) weighing **125lbs.** or less at the time of the official weigh-in will be allowed to play in the backfield or carry the ball at any time. Players weighing **126lbs.** or more will be identified with an "X" on their helmet. These players must play down linemen and start in a 3-point or 4-point stance on offense or defense. Any 5th grader weighing over 125lbs may move up to senior league. A 4th grader that weighs in at 59lbs or less has the option of dropping back to the mite league but must play on the line and wear an "X" on their helmet.
- Boys/girls in the **Mite Division** (2nd & 3rd Grade) weighing **90lbs.** or less at the time of the official weigh-in will be allowed to play in the backfield or carry the ball at any time. Players weighing **91lbs.** or more will be identified with an "X" on their helmet. These players must play down linemen and start in a 3-point or 4-point stance on offense or defense. Any 3rd grader weighing over 90lbs may move up to junior league.

The "X" should be on top of the helmet and be at least 6" to 8" long and visible for game officials.

COACHES INFO:

Each team will be allowed five (5) coaches on the sideline for games; this **INCLUDES** a trainer if so desired (5 adults max). This also includes water boys, ball boys, etc.

One coach from each team **MUST** attend the organizational meeting and concussion seminar to coach for the season, but all coaches and game officials are encouraged to attend.

2026 NRV COACHES MEETING & CONCUSSION SEMINAR

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 2026, 3:00PM

CHRISTIANSBURG RECREATION CENTER - 1600 North Franklin Street, Christiansburg

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LEAGUE RULES:

GAMES:

Each Junior and Senior League game will have at least two currently certified VHSL officials. Mite League will have at least one currently certified VHSL official.

Each team will have two time-outs per half; one timeout may roll over into the second half giving a team 3. (Only 1 timeout can roll over) Coaches (two per team limit) will be allowed to come onto the field during time-outs.

*In the Mite league one coach from each team can be on the field during play for the entire season. Coaches must remain behind safeties on defense and behind running back on offense. Coaches are not allowed to run up to players or move players before the ball is snapped, and certainly not celebrate plays. The coach is there to help give plays to players and should be a quiet bystander.

TIME:

Mite, Junior & Senior Leagues - Eight-minute quarters

Halftime - Eight minutes (during cold weather games or games running behind, this may be reduced)

The offense will have 40 seconds to run a play after the previous play has been blown dead.

The game clock will stop on incomplete passes, out of bounds, scores and time-outs. The clock will restart on the next snap.

The game clock will stop on all penalties and will be restarted when the official resets the ball.

PLAYING REQUIREMENTS:

THE LOCAL RECREATION DEPARTMENTS STRONGLY ENCOURAGE ALL COACHES TO PLAY ALL KIDS EQUALLY. NRV Football Leagues are instructional leagues designed to give all kids of all abilities playing time to learn and develop their football skills. All players who attend the game must play a minimum of 5 plays per half. Special team plays do not count towards a player's minimum playtime requirement. The only players exempt from the all play rule are players who have missed team's schedule practices or players who for health reasons cannot play the minimum amount.

It is the responsibility of the head coach to ensure that all players meet the minimum play requirements. Failure to meet the all-play rule requirement can result in disciplinary actions from local recreation department administrators.

INJURIES:

All injuries are to be reported to the administrators of recreation departments or football clubs.

UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT:

Football equipment will be distributed by corresponding recreation department. All equipment should be returned within a week after the last game of the season. Failure to do so will restrict participation in further activities. If equipment is not returned, parents will be billed.

Any mouthpiece may be used, but the mouthpiece should be bright in color. Any bright color is accepted; this is to make it easier for officials to check and make sure players are wearing them. Mouthpieces must be attached to the helmet.

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PLAYING RULES:

PRACTICES:

All teams will be allowed to have four meetings per calendar week (Calendar week is Sunday – Saturday), including games and practices. Only one practice session will be allowed per day. Practices can last 1.5 hours per session.

1. No full speed head-on blocking or tackling drills in which the players line up more than 3 yards apart are permitted. (Having two linemen in stances immediately across the line of scrimmage from each other and having full-speed drills where the players approach each other at an angle, but not straight ahead into each other are both permitted.) **However, there should be no intentional head-to-head contact!**
2. The amount of contact at each practice will be reduced to a maximum of 1/2 of practice time (45 minutes of practice). In this context, “contact” means any drill or scrimmage in which drills; down line vs. down line full-speed drills; and scrimmages.

During the first week of practice, no contact will be allowed. No pads will be allowed during the first week. Players may wear their helmets. The first week of practice should consist of the fundamentals of blocking, tackling, stance, and conditioning before any inter-squad scrimmaging occurs.

DEFENSE:

Teams may use any legal defense. Players with an “X” on their helmets must start in a 3-point or 4-point stance on the line. **“X” players must play tackle to tackle; an illegal formation penalty will be called if outside the tackle box.**

OFFENSE:

Any kind of offensive play may be used i.e. pass, run, reverse, etc. **Teams using “shotgun” formation; center may not be hit until head is up and he has a chance to defend himself.**

Teams may use any legal offensive formation.

There shall be no blocking below the waist by any player who is outside the free blocking zone (3 yards on either side of line of scrimmage and five yards on either side of the center) except to tackle the runner or a player pretending to be a runner on any type of play. On a double team block, the second blocker must block above the waist.

If a team decides to punt on any down the officials must declare a FREEKICK with no run back by the receiving team. Down lineman must remain down until after the kick has been made. The receiving team will take over possession of the ball where it is caught or where it stops. If it is touched by the receiving team and goes forward it will be marked where first touched. Punts must start with a snap by the center with the ball being punted behind the line of scrimmage.

RUNNING UP THE SCORE:

If a team leads by 24 points or more, a continuous clock will be used and the clock will only stop for time outs and injuries. Once the lead falls below 24 points, regular game rules will go back into effect. **Always consider those on the other side of the ball. Please exhibit good sportsmanship and check the egos at the front gate. This game is for kids, and everyone is here to have an enjoyable experience.**

During the last minute of the game, the team with the ball must inform official they are taking a knee. The official will tell the other team, there will be no pass rush. (This only applies to a when a game is 9 points or more) **Teams up by 24 or more with the ball during the last minute of the game; must take a knee.**

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KICKING GAME:

Kickoffs: There will be no kick-offs in the Mite League or Junior League. The team receiving the ball will take possession at the 30-yard line. In Senior Leagues, kickoffs will be a free kick to open both halves. After a score, opposing team will take over at the 30-yard line. The kicking team will line up in formation on a knee and kickoff from the 40-yard line. The receiving team will ***line up in formation on a knee*** and take possession of the ball wherever it is caught or at the spot the ball rolls dead. If the ball bounces back toward the kicking team, the ball will be placed at the spot of the bounce. The receiving team will start from that spot. Onside kicks are not allowed.

Punts: In ALL Leagues, punts will be a free kick with no rush. All linemen must be in a down position and must remain down until the ball is kicked. **Receiving team may only send 3 players back to field a punt; other 8 players must be on a knee.** No player may leave his or her feet in an attempt to block the kick. The ball must be snapped straight back, **at least five yards** from where the ball was officially placed, **and kicked from that spot.** The receiving team will take possession of the ball wherever it is caught or at the spot the ball rolls dead. If the ball bounces back toward the kicking team, the ball will be placed at the spot of the bounce. *Punter will have 15 seconds to get the punt off before a delay of game penalty is called.* The clock will continue to run during punts, **except** during the last minute of the game. During the last-minute punts will be a dead ball play and no time will expire.

Extra Points: In the Mite and Junior Leagues, extra points will be a free kick with no rush. Mite teams will snap the ball from 3 yards inside the goal line to attempt an extra point. Junior teams will snap the ball from the goal line to attempt an extra point. In the Senior League, extra points will be snapped from the 3-yard line and WILL be a live play. *In all leagues, the ball will be kicked 7 yards back from where the ball is snapped.*

Field Goals: In all leagues, field goals are allowed and will be snapped 7 yards back from the line of scrimmage. In the Mite and Junior Leagues, field goals will be a free kick; in the Senior League, field goals will be live.

Sportsmanship: All players on any kick must refrain from yelling, jumping, waving hands, etc. First infraction will be a warning, second will be an unsportsmanlike penalty.

Players with an “X” may punt and kick extra points. When an extra point is attempted by kicking, the ball must be kicked.

Extra Points: Kick = 2 points Running = 1 point Field Goals = 3 points

No quick kicks will be allowed.

PENALTIES:

NRV Youth Football will follow Virginia High School League Rules for football game rules. All other organizational rules, rules printed here in the rulebook and disciplinary actions will be enforced by the local recreation departments. These currently include Floyd, Montgomery and Pulaski counties, the City of Radford and the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg.

COMMUNICATION DEVICES:

No communication devices are all allowed on the sidelines, booth or stands whether it be between coaches, players or parents. 15-yard unsportsmanlike penalty on first offense, ejection on second offense.

2026 EDDIE SUTPHIN NRV CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES:

Everyone makes the playoffs this year. Standings will no longer be kept. Brackets will be randomly drawn at the end of a regular season. The 2026 Eddie Sutphin NRV Championships will be played on **Saturday, October 24, 2026**, at **Floyd County High School**.

SPORTSMANSHIP POLICY:

NRV YOUTH FOOTBALL SPORTSMANSHIP MISSION:

New River Valley Youth Football League provides a safe, fun, and positive environment for all staff, referees, officials, volunteers, players, parents, legal guardians, relatives, siblings and spectators.

ZERO TOLARANCE POLICY:

New River Valley Youth Football League has a zero-tolerance policy towards inappropriate or disruptive behavior. It is the responsibility of ALL coaches, officials, players, parents, legal guardians, relatives, siblings, and spectators to maintain the highest standards of conduct and sportsmanship while attending all youth football practices and games. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior is defined as but not limited to:

- Using loud, offensive, or vulgar language in aggressive, combative or confrontational manner
- Intimidation, harassment, sarcasm or discrimination in any form
- Violent play, violent conduct or fighting and other behaviors are detrimental to the sporting event.

If any person involved violates the Zero Tolerance Policy said person will be immediately removed from the facility or field and will be asked to leave the property.

New River Valley Youth Football strives to create an environment where all citizens feel safe and supported. Please show respect, be supportive, and help us foster a safe and enjoyable environment for our youth.

Youth sports and activities play an important role in promoting the mental, emotional, social and physical development of children. It is essential for parents, legal guardians, coaches, staff and officials to demonstrate a positive environment. Furthermore, adults involved in youth sporting events should be positive role models of good sportsmanship and should lead by example in demonstrating fairness, respect, and a positive attitude.

We ask that all coaches, officials, players, parents, legal guardians, relatives, siblings, and spectators to be responsible for your words and actions while attending youth football games and intend to conform behavior to the following code of conduct:

1. I understand that profanity or sideline coaching such as yelling or belittling a coach, official, staff, player, parent, legal guardian, relative, sibling and or spectator will not be tolerated.
2. I will not engage or encourage my child in unsportsmanlike conduct with any coach, official, staff, player, parent, legal guardian, relative, sibling and spectator.
3. I will not engage or encourage my child in any behavior which would endanger the health, safety, or well-being of any coach, official, staff, player, parent, legal guardian, relative, sibling and spectator.
4. I will not engage or encourage my child or any other person to engage in the use of profanity.
5. I will not engage or encourage my child or any other person to engage in drugs, alcohol, tobacco or vaping in facilities.
6. I will treat and encourage my child to treat every coach, player, official, staff, parent, legal guardian, relative, sibling and spectator with respect regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation or ability.
7. I will not engage or encourage my child or any other person to engage in physical or verbal abuse aimed at coach, official, staff, player, parent, legal guardian, relative, sibling and spectator.
8. I will not initiate or encourage my child or any other person to initiate a fight or aggressive behavior with any coach, official, staff, player, parent, legal guardian, relative, sibling and spectator.
9. I will support all coaches, officials and staff.

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ACCOUNTABILITY ACTIONS:

PLAYERS:

Any player that commits an un-sportsmanlike foul (slugging, kicking, or knocking an opponent, etc.) will be removed from the game immediately and may not re-enter the game. Any player that is ejected from a game is automatically suspended for the next game.

COACHES:

Any coach that is ejected is automatically suspended for the next game. Ejected coaches must leave field and wait in car or parking lot. Any coach or staff that is ejected from a game is automatically suspended for the next game and could be suspended for up to a year.

SPECTATORS:

Any spectator that makes threats to game officials, league administrators, players or coaches will be removed and suspended for a minimum of 1 year from ALL NRV Football locations. **Effective July 1, 2025, Virginia Senate Bill 986 establishes assaulting a sports official (umpire, referee, judge, scorekeeper, timekeeper, or other neutral participant) during or after a game as a Class 1 misdemeanor.**

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY:

Do not use social media to be critical of teammates, coaches, officials, administrators, or spectators. Negative comments and images, bullying, criticism and sexist remarks can be dangerous and harmful to people's wellbeing and reputation. Your actions on social media will have serious consequences. Players that are found to have acted improperly on social media will face a minimum two week ban from all football related activities (games and practices). Parents or spectators that use social media inappropriately may face bans up to a year.

ACCEPTABLE MUSIC POLICY FOR YOUTH FOOTBALL GAMES:

To maintain a positive, family-friendly atmosphere at all youth football events, NRV Youth Football League has established the following guidelines for playing music before, during, and after games:

Approved Music Content: All music must be clean, free from profanity, vulgar language, or suggestive content. Lyrics must not promote violence, substance use, discrimination, or sexually explicit themes. Instrumental versions or "clean" radio edits are preferred if there is any doubt about lyrics. Genres are not restricted, but the message must align with the values of youth sports.

Volume and Timing. Music may be played: before the game (warm-ups); during halftime; after the game (optional). No music is to be played: while the ball is in play; during player injuries or official timeouts. Volume must be kept at a level that does not interfere with on-field communication or announcements.

Who Controls the Music: Only designated team volunteers or league-approved personnel may operate the sound system. Coaches, parents, spectators or fans may not bring in personal sounds equipment to play their own music.

Prohibited Content: Songs with explicit language, even if popular (e.g., unedited versions of Top 40 or hip-hop tracks). Songs with themes of revenge, guns, alcohol, or romantic/sexual themes. "Diss tracks" or music meant to intimidate or trash talk opposing teams

Enforcement: Any violation of this policy may result in immediate removal of music privileges for the team. Continued violations may result in disciplinary action for the team or league participant.

Concussion

INFORMATION SHEET



This sheet has information to help protect your children or teens from concussion or other serious brain injury. Use this information at your children's or teens' games and practices to learn how to spot a concussion and what to do if a concussion occurs.

What Is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury—or TBI—caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. This fast movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging the brain cells.

How Can I Help Keep My Children or Teens Safe?

Sports are a great way for children and teens to stay healthy and can help them do well in school. To help lower your children's or teens' chances of getting a concussion or other serious brain injury, you should:

- Help create a culture of safety for the team.
 - Work with their coach to teach ways to lower the chances of getting a concussion.
 - Talk with your children or teens about concussion and ask if they have concerns about reporting a concussion. Talk with them about their concerns; emphasize the importance of reporting concussions and taking time to recover from one.
 - Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
 - Tell your children or teens that you expect them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- When appropriate for the sport or activity, teach your children or teens that they must wear a helmet to lower the chances of the most serious types of brain or head injury. However, there is no "concussion-proof" helmet. So, even with a helmet, it is important for children and teens to avoid hits to the head.



Plan ahead. What do you want your child or teen to know about concussion?

How Can I Spot a Possible Concussion?

Children and teens who show or report one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below—or simply say they just "don't feel right" after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body—may have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

Signs Observed by Parents or Coaches

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Forgets an instruction, is confused about an assignment or position, or is unsure of the game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Can't recall events *prior to* or *after* a hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Children and Teens

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems
- Just not "feeling right," or "feeling down"

Talk with your children and teens about concussion. Tell them to report their concussion symptoms to you and their coach right away. Some children and teens think concussions aren't serious, or worry that if they report a concussion they will lose their position on the team or look weak. Be sure to remind them that *it's better to miss one game than the whole season.*



cdc.gov/HEADSUP

CONCUSSIONS AFFECT EACH CHILD AND TEEN DIFFERENTLY.

While most children and teens with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks, some will have symptoms for months or longer. Talk with your children's or teens' healthcare provider if their concussion symptoms do not go away, or if they get worse after they return to their regular activities.

What Are Some More Serious Danger Signs to Look Out For?

In rare cases, a dangerous collection of blood (hematoma) may form on the brain after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body and can squeeze the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take your child or teen to the emergency department right away if, after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, he or she has one or more of these danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching)
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously

► **Children and teens** who continue to play while having concussion symptoms, or who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—have a greater chance of getting another concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing from the first injury can be very serious, and can affect a child or teen for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.

What Should I Do If My Child or Teen Has a Possible Concussion?

As a parent, if you think your child or teen may have a concussion, you should:

1. Remove your child or teen from play.
2. Keep your child or teen out of play the day of the injury. Your child or teen should be seen by a healthcare provider and only return to play with permission from a healthcare provider who is experienced in evaluating for concussion.
3. Ask your child's or teen's healthcare provider for written instructions on helping your child or teen return to school. You can give the instructions to your child's or teen's school nurse and teacher(s) and return-to-play instructions to the coach and/or athletic trainer.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a healthcare provider should assess a child or teen for a possible concussion. Concussion signs and symptoms often show up soon after the injury. But you may not know how serious the concussion is at first, and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days.

The brain needs time to heal after a concussion. A child's or teen's return to school and sports should be a gradual process that is carefully managed and monitored by a healthcare provider.

To learn more, go to [cdc.gov/HEADSUP](https://www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP)



CONCUSSION - OVERVIEW:

A concussion can be caused by a blow to the head, jolt to the body, or any sudden force that results in a rapid acceleration/deceleration of the brain inside the skull. This impact of the brain against the rigid inside walls of the skull can cause a change in neurological function and a host of other symptoms depending on which part of the brain was injured. Youth athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of a concussion. Even what appears to be a “minor ding or bell ringer” has the real risk of catastrophic results when an athlete is returned to action too soon. Second impact syndrome, which in some cases can be fatal, is a direct result of returning to game action before all symptoms have cleared. While most players heal within a few weeks, an athlete who returns to play before a concussion has completely resolved risks re-injuring an already injured brain which can have life threatening consequences. Therefore, continued participation in any sport following a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, as well as increased risk for further injury to the brain, and even death.

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The well-being of the athlete/participant is our greatest concern during any practice or game. Officials, coaches and parents are being asked to make all efforts to ensure that concussed athletes do not continue to participate. Thus,

coaches, parents, and officials should also be looking for signs of concussion in all athletes and should immediately remove any suspected concussed participant from play.

When in doubt, sit them out! It's far better to miss one or two games as a precautionary matter than to risk possible brain injury. No game is worth that.

CONCUSSION - ROLE OF COACHING STAFF:

Coaches/Coaching Staff will NOT be expected to “diagnose” a concussion. That is the job of an appropriate health-care professional. Coaches/Coaching Staffs will be asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors, associated with concussions. If a member of a youth team coaching staff observes questionable signs, symptoms, or behavior, he/she must remove the participant from the game for further evaluation and notify the parent/guardian.

The responsibility of further evaluating and managing the symptomatic participant falls upon the head coach, parent/guardian or appropriate health-care professional. If an appropriate health-care professional on site determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play. If there is no appropriate health-care professional available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHOULD NOT be allowed by the coach or parent/guardian to return to play.

CONCUSSION - ROLE OF GAME OFFICIALS:

Neither officials, nor coaches, will be expected to “diagnose” a concussion, as that is the job of an appropriate health-care professional. Officials are being asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors, associated with concussions. Officials will not be asked to make what could be perceived to be a medical opinion. If an official observes questionable signs, symptoms, or behavior, the official must notify the coach and remove the participant from the game for further evaluation. The game official is not responsible for the sideline evaluation or management of the athlete after he or she is removed from play. The responsibility of further evaluating and managing the symptomatic athlete falls upon the head coach, and/or an appropriate health-care professional. If an appropriate health-care professional on site determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play. If there is no appropriate health-care professional available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete **SHOULD NOT** be allowed by the coach or parent to return to play. The official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play, nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional. Ensuring compliance is the responsibility of the head coach and NOT the game official.

CONCUSSION - COACHES COMPLIANCE:

Any coach that disregards the safety and well-being of a youth sports participant as it relates to concussions will be suspended indefinitely from coaching. Additionally, any coach that misuses this policy to prohibit an otherwise healthy, fit, uninjured player from participating will be suspended indefinitely from coaching.

TACKLE FOOTBALL SAFETY PROCEDURES:

- 1 Practice activities are responsible for a large percentage of football injuries, and many of these injuries are related to live contact tackling and blocking drills.
- 2 The use of the head as the primary blocking or tackling surface should not be allowed.
- 3 The proper football position should be taught (knees flexed, trunk bent, face up and eyes straight ahead).
- 4 Proper equipment, which has been fitted properly, should always be worn during drills.
- 5 In early sessions the emphasis should be on conditioning. Contact should be kept to a minimum.
- 6 When beginning contact drills, be sure to teach fundamentals of tackling and blocking first.
- 7 In blocking, the athlete should be taught never to block a person whose back is to them.
- 8 Players should be taught to regain their feet as soon as possible when knocked down.
- 9 In blocking, tackling, or running, players should not duck their head downward but should keep their eye up.
- 10 In blocking or tackling, the player's hands should be kept closed as much as possible.
- 11 Players should not be allowed to leave their feet in blocking, tackling, catching, or running the ball.
- 12 All participants must always wear a mouthpiece. It is a good idea to have them use mouth guards even in non-contact practices to develop a habit.
- 13 Always make sure to have a warm-up period that includes stretching exercises.

GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES:

- 1 All participants should adhere to all rules of the sport as well as to other regulations that ensure safe conduct of an activity.
- 2 Be certain all participants have parental waiver or medical clearance before engaging in any physical activity.
- 3 See that wearing apparel of participants, including protective equipment, if provided, is fitted correctly and always worn during practice and play.
- 4 Make sure the length and the number of practices is in accordance with the department's requirements. Give attention to fatigue, climate conditions, and the strenuousness of the sport or activity being performed. Adjust length of practice to fit climate or participants.
- 5 Work out a progressive conditioning schedule that is specific to sport and will meet the physical demands of the sport.
- 6 Develop skills before scrimmage.
- 7 Supervise all play.
- 8 Allow no horseplay.
- 9 Adapt all drills to the abilities of young, immature children.
- 10 Insist upon sportsmanship at all times.
- 11 Developing skills is one of the most important keys to preventing injuries. A player who has proper knowledge of the activity to be played will reduce the possibility of injury.

