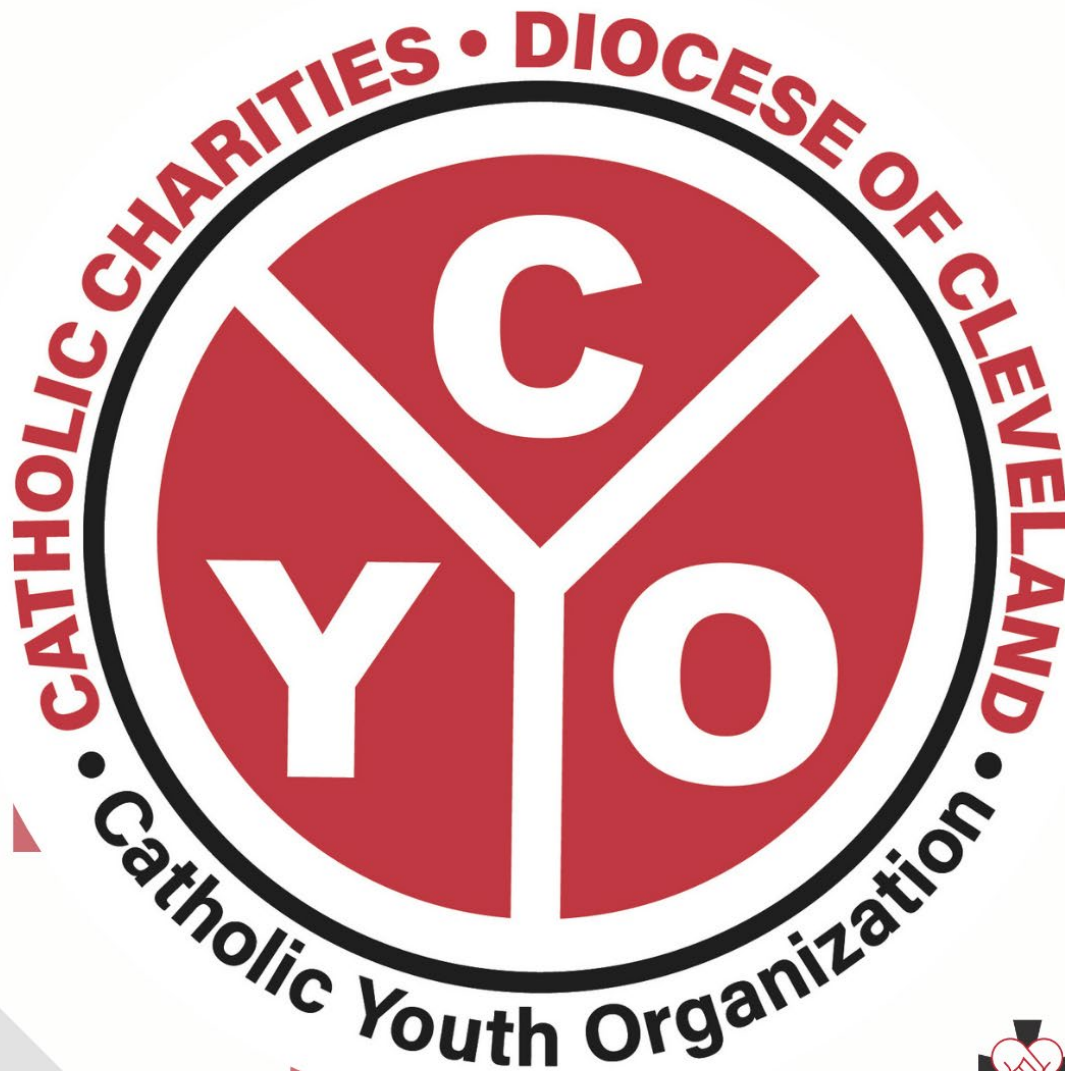
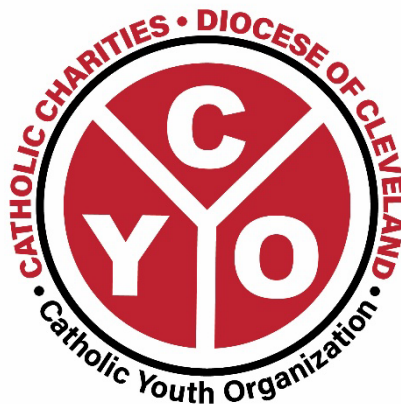


1st-4th Flag Football COACHES MEETING FALL 2026

The Way We do Things Here



ccdacle.org/cyo



DIOCESE OF CLEVELAND CYO FLAG FOOTBALL COACH'S MEETING

1. Introductions
2. Program Planner
3. Participation Form
4. Points of Emphasis
5. Code of Conduct
6. Article
7. Sanctioned Events
8. Resources



@CYOSportsDOC
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CYO inspires young people to know God, to love God, and to serve God through athletics

July	13	Coaches Development Program - Seton Catholic School Gym, 6:00 pm 6923 Stow Rd, Hudson, 44236 Equipment distribution may begin, no practices.
	18-21	Dick's Sporting Goods Shop Days
	20	Fall sports season opens, practices may begin, sanction event period begins Make Up Weigh In – Cleveland CYO Office 7911 Detroit Ave. 10:00am-4:00pm
	21	Make Up Weigh In – Akron CYO Office 812 Biruta St. Akron 10:00am-4:00pm
	22	In-person mandatory fall sports season coach's meetings, 6:00-8:00pm Location: Walsh Jesuit High School, 4550 Wyoga Lake Rd. Cuyahoga Falls 44224
	25	Football Coaches Meeting – Huntington Bank Field Mandatory for 4th Grade Padded Flag – 8th Grade Tackle Asst. & Head Coaches
	27	Fall sports season early registration closes; regular registration begins, 9:00am
	28	In-person mandatory fall sports season coach's meetings, 6:00-8:00pm. Location: Beaumont High School, 3301 North Park Blvd. Cleveland Hts. 44118
	29	In-person mandatory fall sports season coach's meetings, 6:00-8:00pm. Location: Magnificat High School, 20770 Hilliard Blvd. Rocky River 44116
August	3	Fall sports season regular registration ends, 9:00am
	4	Team fee payments and fee summary due Last day to enter teams' blackouts
	5	Coaches Development Program - Gesu (Gym) 6:00 pm 2470 Miramar Blvd, University Heights, 44118
	8	Coaches Development Program - St. Ambrose Gym, 9:00am 929 Pearl Rd, Brunswick, 44212
	10	Deadline to add athletes and coaches to rosters, 9:00am
	14	Fall sports season schedules available on CYO website
	18	Coaches Development Program - St. Jude 6:00 pm. 594 Poplar Street, Elyria, 44035
	22	Fall sports regular season competitions begin
September	12-13	Parents and VIP Weekend
	20	Team Mass Sunday
	26-27	Officials Appreciation Weekend
October	3-4	Regular Season Games End
	25	Diocese of Cleveland CYO Football Championship
	25	Fall sports season ends



Flag Football Game Roster Participation Form



List first & last names. No initials or nicknames please

Team: _____

Division: 1st Grade 2nd Grade 3rd Grade 4th Grade

Head Coach: _____

Asst Coaches: _____

Please list players in numerical order.

All Guest Players will be listed with "GP" before their name.

Number	Name	Participation			
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
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		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4

Players Available: _____

Coach's Signature: _____

Final Score: _____

DIOCESE OF CLEVELAND CYO POINTS OF EMPHASIS

The collaboration of NFL Flag rules and USA Flag rules were used as a guide to construct this set of rules for consistency and fair play. CYO game rules may not be altered. Only the CYO Administration may authorize changes.

OFFICIAL TEAM

- Seven (7) players on the field.
- May start with five (5) players.

WHO'S ELIGIBLE: Grades 1-4 Boys & Girls; **Kindergartners are not eligible.**

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY ATHLETES WHEN I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO FIELD MY OWN TEAM?

Please contact your Athletic Director for more information on forming a team.

EQUIPMENT & UNIFORMS

- Ball Size:
 - All levels will use the **Pee-wee size ball**.
- Must have matching uniforms.
- Each player must wear a flag belt around the waist with a minimum of two "Popper Style" flags. Flags must be a different color than the players' pants. Flags must be positioned on the hips of the player. Flags must be at least two (2) inches wide and a minimum of twelve inches long. Flags cannot be attached to the pants. Each team must provide its own flags.
- Must wear a mouthpiece/mouthguard. A mouthpiece cannot be white or clear in color.

OFFICIALS

- **There will be one official assigned per game.**
- If an official does not show up at your game, each team should provide one adult to officiate the game.

PARTICIPATION

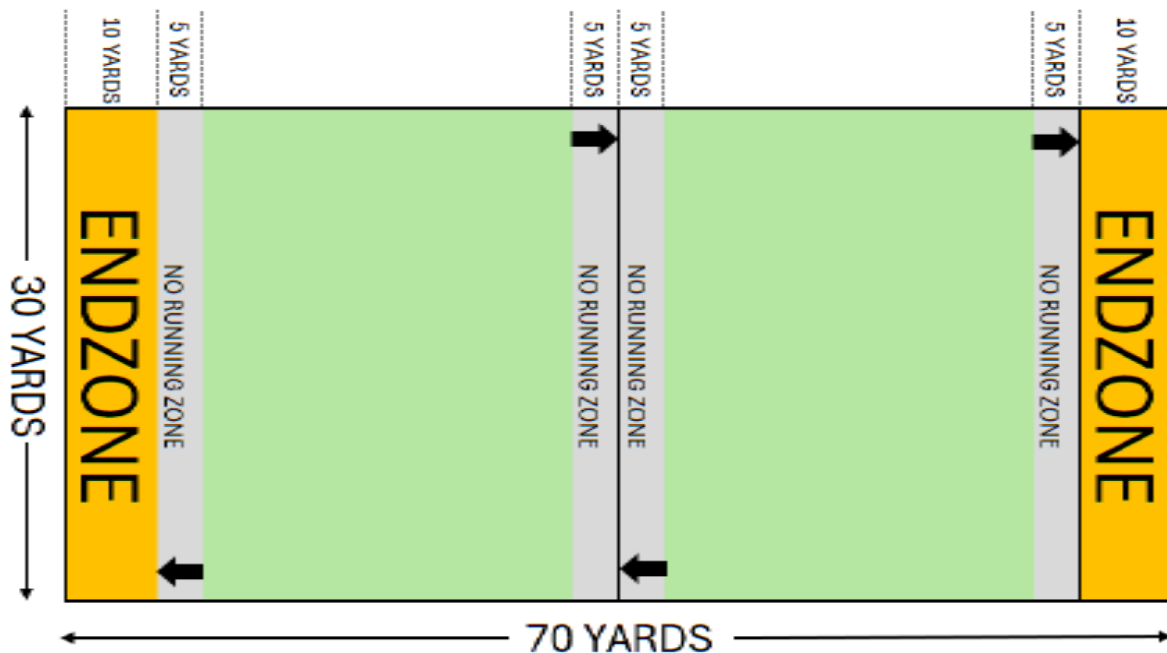
- Players must play a minimum of half of the game; twelve minutes in each half.
- To promote position rotation, each team must play a minimum of two quarterbacks for game. It is recommended that each team play more than two in each game, to give every opportunity to have all players experience every position in the game. Both quarterbacks must complete a minimum of a twelve-minute segment for participation in each half. Additional quarterbacks used must complete one segment of participation.

GUEST PLAYER RULE

- Guest Player Rule: If a team has less than 8 athletes, a guest player may be moved from the member's other CYO flag football team(s) to fill the positions at the start of a game under the following restrictions:
- BEFORE THE GAME, the guest player must be reported by means of [Guest Player](#) on the CYO Website.
- Guest players cannot be used if you have more than 9 players.
- The same individual may be moved as a guest player for no more than two (2) games during the season.
- Guest players **are not allowed** for sanctioned events.

FIELD SIZE AND LAYOUT

- The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones.
- 'NO RUN ZONES' are located 5 yards prior to midfield and 5 yards prior to the opponents endzone.
 - 'NO RUN ZONES' are in place to prevent teams from conducting run plays. While in the "NO RUN ZONES", teams cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage. All plays must result in a forward pass across the line of scrimmage.
 - 'NO RUN ZONES' are not enforced for the **1st & 2nd grade divisions**.



PRACTICE AND COACHING GUIDELINE

- Practice sessions shall be limited to one (1) session per day not to exceed 90 minutes in duration

TIMING & OVERTIME

- A. Play Clock – 40 seconds once the official marks the ball ready for play. **Teams will receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced.**
- One Warning before delay-of-game
 - Game Clock – Two – 24-minute halves. 48 minutes total with a running clock:
 - Clock stops for time-outs & player injury, & at the twelve-minute segment of each half for substitutions.
 - Half time – 5 minutes.

SCORING/BALL PLACEMENT/FIRST DOWNS

Scoring

- Touchdown will be awarded 6 points.
- PAT-Run/Pass will award 1 point from the 5-yard line. 'NO RUN ZONES' RULES apply for 3rd & 4th grade divisions.
- PAT-Run/Pass will be awarded 2 points from the 10-yard line.
- Safety will be awarded 2 points.
- A turnover on an attempted extra point immediately ends the play.

Ball Placement

- At the start of the game, or half the ball will be put in play on the 5-yard line.
- After a touchdown the ball will be put in play on the 5-yard line or 10-yard line for extra point based on coach's decision. After a coach declares to go for 1pt or 2 pt, any changes to that decision will require the use of a timeout.
- After a safety the ball will be put in play at the 5-yard line.
- After each play, the ball will be placed in the middle of the field.

First Down

- The offensive team takes possession at the 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crossed midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offense fails to score, the ball changes into possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
- Special teams are **NOT** permitted. NO Punting.

FUMBLES

Bad Snap fumbles

- **1st & 2nd Grade** - If the ball hits the ground because of a bad snap the play will be replayed. If it happens a second consecutive time, the ball is dead and the next down is played.
- **3rd & 4th Grade** - If the ball hits the ground because of a bad snap, the ball is dead and the next down is played.

Fumbles during hand off exchanges, or past the line of scrimmage will be blown dead and the ball is spotted where the ball carriers feet were at the time of fumble.

FORMATIONS

- Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
- Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
- Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
- The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between their legs or sideways to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave their hands.
- The Center may not sneak the ball.

RUNNING

- The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball across the Line of Scrimmage (Even in scramble situations). The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap under center directly or in shotgun formation.
- Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, or a backward pass, pitch or lateral has occurred, the 7-second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Teams are not allowed to run in the 'NO RUN ZONES' - (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD). **Not applicable in 1st-2nd grade divisions.**

PASSING

- The quarterback has a 7 second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds, the play is dead, the down counts and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, pitched or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage, the 7 second rule is no longer in effect.
- If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7 second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS) and it will be the next down.

SCREENING/BLOCKING IS NOT PERMITTED

DEFENSIVE RUSH

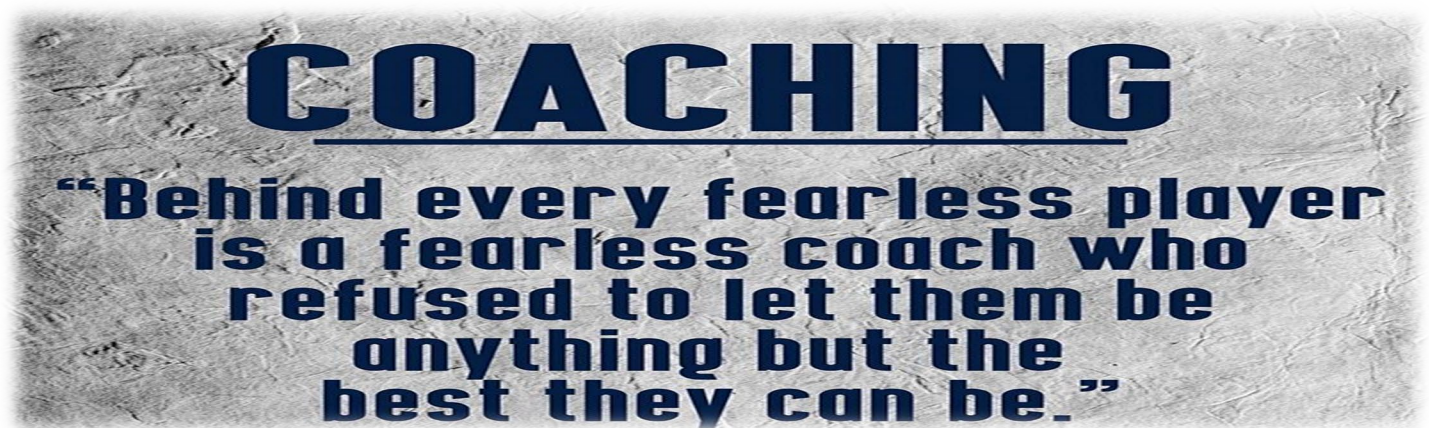
- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Up to two (2) players can rush the quarterback. Rushers MUST identify themselves by raising their hand before the snap. Rushers MUST rush the passer immediately after the snap. Delayed rush is NOT permitted. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend the line of scrimmage. **1st & 2nd Grade Divisions – Defensive rushers are not permitted.**
- Once the ball is handed off, pitched or lateraled backwards behind the line of scrimmage, all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage to defend and pull the flag.
- A special marker, or the game official, will designate a rush line 7 yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.

MERCY RULE

- When a team reaches an 18-point spread differential over their opponents, the team is expected to conduct itself in a manner that the game officials and CYO administration feel show respect and dignity towards its opponent. Player/position rotation is highly encouraged.
- The winning team will have 3 downs to cross midfield. Once the ball crosses midfield, the winning team will have 3 downs to score instead of 4.
- The losing team will start possession at midfield.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Teams are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that the game officials and CYO administration feel shows respect and dignity towards its opponent.
- CYO is dedicated to the safety of every child, parent and adult. We will not tolerate any form of aggressive or abusive behavior in the CYO community. Examples include: yelling at officials or site personnel; physical intimidation or threatening behavior; verbal or physical harassment; and any disruptive behaviors. If any of these behaviors occur, consequences will be assessed as outlined in **Bylaw 9** of the CYO Charter & Bylaws. <https://www.ccdocle.org/files/assets/2025-26charterandbylawsfinal.pdf>



A transformational coach views winning as an outcome, not a priority, and puts the focus on helping athletes grow and reach their full potential, beyond just sports. On the opposite side, a transactional coach is someone who makes winning the ultimate goal and is less concerned about the overall experience.

Top 12 Traits of Youth Flag Football Coaches

Coaching kids is a big deal. After all, you'll be teaching them not only football, but teamwork, success, failure and life lessons all at the same time. We polled youth flag football parents on the top 12 traits they felt all youth football coaches should possess. Let us know what you think in the comments below!

Make it Fun - Most children play sports to either be with their friends, have fun, or because they enjoy the sport. If a kid is at practice for any of those reasons – they're having fun, right? Focus on fun! Scores, results and the outcome aren't as important at a younger age. The important thing is the kids are having fun and will want to return time after time to stay active and get better.

Kids First - As a youth football coach, it's your job to ensure kids are priority. You shouldn't be coaching so you can tell your friends you coach the league winners, it should be because you're passionate about what you do. Making it a fun, friendly and healthy environment for kids should be a top priority.

Patience - You may quickly forget they're just kids. Shouting at them like a drill-sergeant won't do anything but make them unhappy. Patience is key, because they're still learning life...let alone football. Youth football should be fun, and they shouldn't feel pressured.

Involve Everyone - Discrimination is never ok. Never. Regardless of one's race, gender, religion, ability level, disability, etc. – everyone, EVERYONE is entitled to play. If you're a true coach, you care more about ensuring every kid has a chance on the field than sticking to "the A team", at a younger age especially. It's important that everyone's rotated throughout the game so everyone gets an equal opportunity to play. Remember, it's about fun – not all about winning.

Bring Energy - Dealing with kids, especially when it's an active sport –like youth football– can be tiresome. It's important you're energetic, fit and proactive – but not just physically; but mentally, too!

By the Book - You need to be able to train, teach and coach youth football in a manner which is right. If you're very competitive with a tendency to "cut corners" or anything else that can be deemed as misconduct – then coaching may not be for you.

Show that you Care - You need to be able to care for the squad, but not just as athletes – as people and friends, too. You should be able to speak to each parent and tell them any concerns you have; concerns you have simply because you know enough and care enough about them.

Trust and Confidence - Parents and kids should place a lot of confidence and trust in the coach. The parents need to trust you're a good role model for the kids, and their kids need to trust you have their best interest at heart.

Safety First - A child's safety is paramount and will always be the youth flag football coach's main priority. Every injury should be evaluated, especially head injuries, so make sure and don't push the envelope just to get another victory if a child's safety is of concern.

Good Sportsmanship - As youth flag football coaches begin working with the kids, they'll understand it's not all about the game and winning, but it's also about shaping the kids to be better people. This is done by ensuring the kids know what it takes to be a good sport, why winning isn't important and why it should be fun. They'll be looking up to you and tend to mirror your every action and reaction, so a good example is important for any youth flag football coach!

Everyone's a Winner - Every kid needs to feel like a winner. Whether they lost by a little or lost by a lot, whether they made the big plays or dropped every pass – it doesn't matter. A kid's morale – especially in regard to youth flag football – is very precious. It's important that you keep their morale high by making them aware everyone's a winner regardless of the results!

Positive - Negative comments are remembered easier than positive comments. Youth flag football coaches need to understand that while you may need to correct a kid's mistake, this can still be done in a positive manner. Never use bullying tactics.

CYO inspires young people to know God, to love God, and to serve God through athletics.

From Flag to Friday Night—Long-Term Athlete Development in Youth American Football

by Joe Eisenmann, PhD and Clive J. Brewer, MS, CSCS

NSCA Coach February 2019

Vol 4, Issue 5

Approximately 2 million youth from 6 - 12 years of age participate in football every year. This article discusses the importance of long-term athletic development (LTAD) for youth football athletes and the significance of a player development pathway for long-term success and longevity in the sport.

Introduction

Football is considered by many to be America's game. During the fall and into the winter months, the game captivates millions of Americans for the entire weekend—Friday (high school), Saturday (college), and Sunday (professional). At the same time, approximately 2 million youth 6-12 years of age participate in football every year. Although youth numbers are more difficult to ascertain, the National Federation of State High School Associations reported that there were nearly 1.1 million high school football participants in 2016. Of this youth and high school "pipeline," 6.8% of high school seniors will play National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) football and from there only 1.9% will advance to the professional level. To date, it has not been systematically studied how elite football players develop and advance through the system. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of long-term athlete development (LTAD) principles as they could be applied to American football at the youth level. This article will also discuss the important role strength and conditioning coaches can have in the implementation of this model in their community.

Long-Term Athlete Development

Currently, there has been increased attention on youth sports in general, and more specifically LTAD. A recent report from the Aspen Institute's Project Play Report Card on Youth Sports gave youth sports in the United States an overall grade of "C". These concerns are considered in LTAD models, or what the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) calls the American Development Model (ADM).

In brief, LTAD has been defined in the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) LTAD Position Statement as "the habitual development of athleticism over time to improve health and fitness, enhance physical performance, reduce the relative risk of injury, and develop the confidence and competence of all youth,". In turn, athleticism is defined as "the ability to repeatedly perform a range of movements with precision and confidence in a variety of environments, which require competent levels of motor skills, strength, power, speed, agility, balance, coordination, and endurance,". Additionally, if these athletic traits are to be optimally developed and executed during competition, basic principles of sound nutrition and sport psychology also need to be considered. Furthermore, these athletic traits need to transfer to sport-specific technical skills that are executed within the tactical environment of the sport. Thus, when truly considering LTAD, the holistic development of the athlete in the four main domains of athletic performance— technical, tactical, physical, and mental—need to be taken into account. In addition, the game structure and how it can be evolved to deliver the principles of development and safety also need to be considered and is addressed elsewhere in this article.

A Brief History and Key Tenets of LTAD

Before the application of LTAD principles are applied to the sport of American football, a brief discussion of the key tenets is warranted. The reader is referred to the specific resources of both the NSCA position paper and the USOC ADM website for details.

The concept of LTAD stems from practices of Eastern European sports science and athletic development during the Cold War era. Many Eastern Bloc countries developed youngsters for national competition through a sport school system where they were tested and selected into schools for specialized sports training that included a regimented daily routine of athletic preparation. Most recently, the concept of LTAD has been popularized by Istvan Balyi, a native of Hungary who moved to the National Coaching Institute in British Columbia, Canada. Balyi, working with Richard Way, developed a seven-stage model with age and developmentally appropriate activities within each stage. There was a major impetus for LTAD in Canada at this time due to a poor performance in the 2004 Olympics, which was attributed to a decaying national sports system. Throughout the last decade, LTAD was adapted by Canadian national sport organizations, including Football Canada, and several other national sport bodies across the world. To learn more about the Balyi LTAD model refer to the book for a full account or visit the Canadian Sport for Life website.

The United States was relatively late in adopting LTAD. Disturbing statistics on falling sport participation rates, childhood obesity, physical inactivity, and a projected shorter lifespan of the current generation prompted the USOC and its National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to create the ADM in 2014. The ADM is comprised of four key elements: 1) a

statement, 2) a visual model, 3) NGB programming, and 4) resources that are available at the website for interested stakeholders.

The five key principles of the ADM include:

1. Universal access to create opportunity for all athletes
2. Developmentally-appropriate activities that emphasize motor and foundational skills
3. Multi-sport participation
4. Fun, engaging, and progressively challenging atmosphere
5. Quality coaching at all age levels

These key principles are based on research-based recommendations. Universal access for all athletes regardless of gender, race, physical disability, economic status, and ability allows everyone to reap the myriad of benefits from participating in sport. For the youth athlete, focusing on the development of fundamental movement and motor skills in a fun and engaging environment develops competency and confidence, which in turn increases the likelihood of continued participation in sport. Of course, the preceding statement is highly dependent on the quality of coaching. The Aspen Institute's Project Play identified that only about 30% of coaches reported receiving training in health and safety (cardiopulmonary resuscitation, basic first aid, concussion management), sport-specific skills and tactics, effective motivation techniques, and physical conditioning and injury prevention. Finally, the recommendation of multisport participation has recently been addressed in a consensus statement outlining limited evidence of the benefits of early sports specialization and the increased risk of overuse injury and burnout.

Currently, several NGBs report to have adopted the ADM with USA Hockey leading the efforts (see admkids.com). Recently, USA Football has focused more attention on the ADM as a possible solution to declining participation rates and concerns for the safety of the game. This will be the focus of the following section.

A Framework for LTAD in American Football

Per the USOC ADM, the ultimate goal is to create positive experiences for American athletes at every level by helping them realize their full athletic potential and utilize sport as a path toward an active and healthy lifestyle. With this in mind, consider a framework for LTAD in American football.

A few overarching themes based on general LTAD principles include:

- The goal is to ensure that young athletes are doing the right things at the right time for their long-term development instead of their immediate development. It is at the high school level that the complete development of a player really accelerates, and the high school coach and program continues to be at the heart of fostering individual development, competitiveness, and commitment to succeeding within the game.
- Learning progressively more demanding versions of football along with technical and tactical skill progressions along the game pathway.
- This pathway and strategy should foster a life-long enjoyment of the game with its fitness and social benefits, providing an opportunity and an appropriate environment for all American children (and adults) to play a form of football that challenges them and provides an outlet for physical activity.
- All aspects of the pathway are athlete-centered, coach-led, development-driven, and administrator-supported.

The Game Pathway

For most, but not all youngsters who participate in organized youth football, they enter directly into traditional full-field 11-player per side or they may enter into flag football for a few years and then advance into traditional football. Unlike other sports, like baseball or soccer, football does not have a clear progression of game formats. In baseball, youngsters often progress from t-ball to coach pitch to player pitch. And, even once player pitch baseball begins there are modifications to field size whereby the pitching distance and distance between bases progressively increases across age groups. Thus, a potential solution for football is using a modified game. The authors have learned through personal communications and work with USA Football that small-sided, modified versions of the game exist throughout the United States. USA Football gathered such information and developed "Rookie Tackle" to serve as a bridge-game between flag football and 11-player tackle and to become part of USA Football's adoption of the ADM. The 2017 pilot season included 10 leagues across the United States with plans to expand efforts in Rookie Tackle in 2018. Key aspects of Rookie Tackle include:

- 6 - 8 players per side and reduced roster sizes
- Improved coach: player ratio, and focus on skill development and participation
- Smaller playing field
- Position sampling

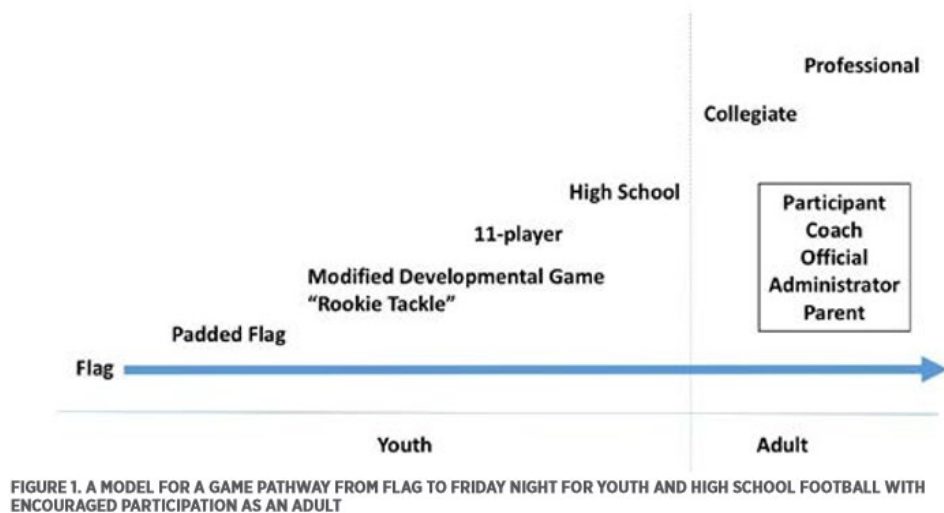
- No special teams
- 2-point stance for linemen
- Center uncovered and no blitzing

During the fall of 2017, the game of football was also confronted with a media surge warning about the safety of the game and specific concerns about short- and long-term consequences of concussions and sub-concussive head impacts, primarily in former professional football players. This led to calls for a ban on tackle football before the age 12 or until high school thus calling for a greater emphasis on flag football. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the pros and cons of this debate. However, safety and adoption of LTAD principles should not be mutually exclusive. For example from a physical developmental perspective, the need to start linemen in the 2-point stance reflects the levels of strength and postural development of a younger player: placing a helmet on a long lever (spine) in a 3-point stance encourages falling forward (leading with the head) to come out of stance. Conversely, the 2-point stance allows for the center of mass to be centered above the base of support, from where it is easier to teach forward and lateral movement. Importantly, this gives better control of the helmet (neck and head), especially in the presence of fatigue.

There are also some innovative football coaches who have been exploring another modified version of the game called padded flag football that may also fit into the game pathway. Padded flag football is played after flag football and can be seen as an introduction to contact skills. Regular equipment or soft shell equipment can be worn in padded flag football. Similar rules to Rookie Tackle are enforced but instead of a tackle, the ball carrier is downed by a flag pull similar to flag football. Some leagues also use this year to focus on instruction in blocking and tackling techniques which include drills that can include dummies and padded shields to develop correct techniques. Thus, players have a full year of instruction in blocking and tackling before they enter into full contact and tackle football.

Progressive ideas that build from this include eliminating contact outside of the line of scrimmage, such that higher velocity moves do not lead to impacts, and ground collision (an underestimated impact force) is avoided. Removing the kicking game similarly eliminates kick-return collisions and emphasizes the focus on offense/defense. Similarly, eliminating low blocks and low tackles increases the focus on quality contact between the hips and numbers, with optimal body posture at the point of impact being the desired outcome. Considerations should also be made to remove the game clock and use total possessions or possessions per series that would facilitate player focus and engagement—a key aspect of youth sports.

The proposed pathway and strategy builds foundational game experiences, provides environments where techniques can become skills and puts these into practice by gradually introducing the player to contact prior to high school. In addition, a flag football for life approach (represented by the arrow in Figure 1) can be considered for those who do not wish to engage in tackle football or for adults who enjoy the game. Furthermore, adults exposed to the ADM pathway would have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriate to participate in youth football as a coach, official, league administrator, or sport parent.



The Player Development Pathway

As previously mentioned, the player development pathway should take into account the technical, tactical, physical, and mental development of the athlete in an age- and developmentally appropriate manner. Indeed, a key aspect of a LTAD

program is to make sure that the correct skills are emphasized in the right sequence. The key tenets of athletic development have been thoroughly addressed elsewhere and are addressed below.

Several analogies can be used here to highlight the learning of movement skills including learning how to write (e.g., words, sentences, paragraphs, etc.) and mathematics. At the youth level, fundamental movement skills are the basis of athletic development. These fundamental skills can be considered within the following categories:

- Stability: posture, static balance, dynamic balance, falling and landing (forward, backward, sideways, and on feet), rotating (forward, backward, and sideways).
- (Bi-lateral) Object Control: underarm throwing, overarm throwing, catching (various heights and speeds), kicking, bouncing, striking static objects, striking moving objects, intercepting.
- (Multidirectional) Movement: walking, running, vertical jumping, horizontal jumping, hopping, galloping, skipping, leaping, and bounding.

In essence, one needs to master fundamentals before advancing to more advanced skills. In football, this means teaching fundamental movement skills like balance, coordination, and fundamental blocking before complex skills like combo blocking to offensive linemen or bull and jerk, bull and rip, bull and swim, or other linked pass rush skills to defensive linemen. As well as the appropriate sequencing of skill progressions, it is also important to link skill expectations to neuromuscular and musculoskeletal development, in that skills should not be introduced before players are typically physically developed enough to undertake them.

Specific to football, the development of contact skills, specifically tackling, has drawn concern given recent attention to head impacts and concussion. Thus, the teaching of fundamental skills such as fundamental athletic position, bodyweight squat, hip hinge, lunge, and triple extension are vital to executing blocking and tackling. Furthermore, teaching proper deceleration technique is also important to tackling. The fundamental movement skills of hopping, skipping, running, backpedaling, shuffling, decelerating, and cutting are important for multidirectional movement on the football field, such as running passing routes and playing pass defense.

These fundamental movement skills can easily be incorporated into a dynamic warm-up or movement preparation period at the beginning of practice or throughout practice as microdosing sessions. Microdosing is a concept taken from the drug industry, where low, “sub-therapeutic” doses are administered to examine the response during the development of the drug. Applied to sports training, it can be seen as using a distribution of weekly training across several short sessions as opposed to fewer longer sessions to enhance athletic traits, often times because coaches are focused on technical and tactical aspects of the sport.

It is also important to note that the movement skills do not always need to be conducted with athletes standing in lines or in isolation. They can be performed in a fun and well-designed obstacle course or using a games-based approach, particularly in younger athletes. The latter concept means that the generic and positional technical/tactical skills along with the player’s ability to determine when and how to use these in a game to his or her best advantage can be developed in conjunction with physical capacities, and we can also fully prepare a child to graduate to the next level of play.

Of course, formal strength and conditioning practices are common in high school football players, and some of the athletes are exposed to formal training at younger ages. For the youth football player, it is important to lay a foundation for these formal strength and conditioning activities by teaching the appropriate postures and patterns for squats, hip hinges, push-ups, planks, etc. that can be transferred between the field and the weight room. Initially, these foundational strength training movements can be taught using bodyweight or light external loads.

Nurturing Physical Development

Planning is important in a program for developmental athletes, especially since the objective is to deliver the appropriate biomotor abilities in the correct sequential order to promote the long-term development of the athlete. If a program is planned and progressed properly, it will enable a young athlete to be physically prepared for transitions between stages (e.g., from middle school to freshman to junior varsity to varsity high school). This requires knowledge of the trainability of the youth and adolescent until the point of adulthood (biologically), where all physiological systems become fully trainable and adaptive to specific training stimuli.

Given the above, it is also important to note that all aspect of fitness (strength, speed, endurance, mobility, and combinations and derivatives of these) can be developed within children at every stage—not just during the popularized yet unfounded “sensitive periods” or “windows of opportunity.” However, as indicated in Figure 2, the components of

the motor system that influence muscular strength do not develop at a uniform rate. Understanding this developmental curve allows for the focus to be on two important determinants for the physical development program. Firstly, it provides a guideline for the physiological constraints on program delivery in terms of the methodology and volume/intensity loading. Secondly, it provides a framework for identifying how training programs should be devised to optimally support and reinforce the development of the motor system. Because so many of the components of football skills are reliant on an athlete's ability to rapidly produce multidirectional forces (a function of strength, speed and postural control) it is no surprise that the neuromuscular and musculoskeletal system development are central tenants to the athlete development model (Figure 2). In particular, the importance of the neuromuscular system as a precursor to strength, power, and speed cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, prioritizing appropriate strength, power, and motor skill competency are the major priorities for a strength and conditioning coach working with young athletes. The neuromuscular system is governed by the central nervous system, which is optimally stimulated by both load and velocity. This is important information for coaches to relate to in skill development (e.g., throwing or kicking farther in the early years rather than more accurately will optimally benefit the development of the action). However, it is important to note that in physical development terms, the output objective (e.g., strength, speed, power) must not come at the expense of optimal postures, as this would be contraindicated to the long-term development of the player. The ability to link effective movement postures with effective loading postures will provide a sound basis for the development of the football athlete over time

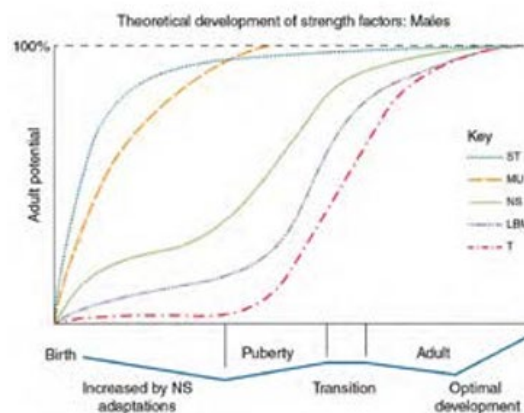


FIGURE 2. THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF STRENGTH OUTPUT AS A CONSEQUENCE OF PHYSIOMECHANICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MALE MOTOR SYSTEM

Adapted with permission from Pierce, K, Brewer, C, Ramsey, M, Byrd, R, Sands, WE, Stone, ME, and Stone, MH. Opinion paper & literature review: *Youth Resistance Training Professional Strength and Conditioning Journal* July: 9-22, 2008.

System Integration

A final consideration for the implementation of an effective LTAD model in a school or community is system alignment and integration. For LTAD to truly work, coaches need to be on same page within a league or community. Too often, there are incongruent practices from one team to another, let alone between sports. If there is no systematic progression or curriculum, then it becomes difficult to carry out progressions in skill development from one season or year to the next. Using the school analogy again, just think if there was no curriculum from grade to grade and teachers did not communicate with each other.

Finally, football is one sport—or one subject. System alignment and integration should also consider physical education and other sports, whether they be school or club sport. To have a developmentally appropriate model where everyone talks to each other and

Summary and Conclusion

Despite recent concerns for the safety of the game and specifically short- and long-term brain injury, high school football remains the top participation sport among boys and collegiate and professional football are widely popular. However, recent trends also indicate a decrease in participation at the youth and high school levels and in viewership at the professional level. Thus, many believe that it is a critical time for the game, and thus re-envisioning a long-term football development pathway, particularly at the youth level, is timely. This pathway should consider age- and developmentally-appropriate strategies for the technical, tactical, physical, and mental domains within game types that also fit the needs and capabilities of youth. In doing so, the football LTAD model needs to be athlete-centered, coach driven, and supported by the administration. Finally, a sound LTAD program should foster competent and confident movers who can enjoy football and other physical activities and sports throughout the lifespan. is on the same page across ages and sports is certainly easier said than done.

Resources

[11HeatRelatedIllness.pdf](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bacsx_7_EWg

Conducting and Effective Flag Football Practice

This video is great for coaches, especially first year coaches for how to conduct affective practices. This video goes over the basics from how to prepare a practice plan, equipment you should bring to practice, drills you should run, and even keeping activities age appropriate. For a coach who does not have the experience that some others may have, this can be a vital tool when it comes to managing the children and time in an effective way at each practice. It talks about allotting an adequate amount of time for each activity at practice, which is a great skill to have, especially when looking to keep the younger players focused and engaged. This coach has a plethora of knowledge and when it comes to flag football and his videos will be great assets for our coaches.

Flag Football Drills

This video is also great for flag football as it focuses on a number of drills for flag football players. This can be a great tool for any of our coaches as they can take these drills and incorporate them into their own practices. Many of these coaches are coaching for the first time, so they may not have a plethora of practice plans and drills, so a video such as this can be a great resource for all of our coaches.

<https://flagfootballacademy.com/youth-flag-football-drills/>

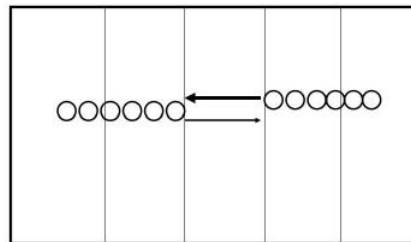
<https://www.stack.com/a/10-fun-flag-football-passing-drills/>

<https://gwrymca.org/blog/playing-flag-football>

Team Hand-off Exchange

With this drill, you can have a number of players work on the proper way to give and receive a hand-off. Divide your players into 2 lines, approximately 20 yards away from each other. A player from one line starts with the ball. On the coach's whistle, the player with the ball races down field (maintaining the proper grip on the football). Once the player reaches the 1st player in the other line, the player with the ball hands the ball off to that 1st player. That player is now the ball carrier and races down field towards the other line. Emphasize holding the ball properly when running, good hand-off exchange (hand-off acceptance target, and good hand-offs into target). This is a great drill to use if you are employing reverse, double, or triple reverse plays that rely on a smooth hand-off to be effective.

Team Hand-Off Relay



Flag Sweep Drill- It's great to get your running backs running close to full speed when they take the handoff from the QB, making it much easier for them to begin eluding defenders from the start. In this drill, have a centre, a QB, and a line of running backs, wide left or wide right. On the snap, the running back takes off toward the QB and accepts the hand-off using proper technique and sweeps wide then turns it up field. Add cones for the RB to get through and a defender or two to simulate game play. Rotate positions on every play.

Swarm Drill- For young players, it's a good idea to use language that they can relate to. Explain to your team that a good defense is like a swarm of Bees around a Hive. Instead of Bees around a Hive, you want your Defense swarming around the Ball Carrier. This drill can be done with the entire defense vs. the entire offense, or you can use a skeleton offense

vs. your entire defense. At the coach's command, the offense starts the play. When a defender grabs the ball carriers flag, instruct all your players to **FREEZE!** Go around and count how many players there are around the ball carrier. You want to avoid 1 on 1 play (only 1 player making the tackle is around the ball). There should be a number of players surrounding the ball carrier.

<https://www.mojo.sport/coachs-corner/10-best-u8-flag-football-drills>

Flag Pulling Drill

You should practice flag pulling at every practice. Besides catching a football, this is one of the most important skills your team should master. For a pure focus on just flag pulling (plus a little work on elusiveness for the kid with the ball), the "snake drill" is a great one.

Set up four cones in a rectangular shape, with a cone at each corner. The long sides are about 7 yards apart, the shorter side about 4 yards apart. Have your kids split into two lines, lining up at opposite corners. The kids in one line are the "offense" and should have footballs in their hands. The kids at the other corner are defenders. On your whistle, the first offensive players and first defender should run down the long side and around the cone, into the rectangle. From there, the offensive player wants to try to run through the cones to get to the two at the other side. The defender's job is to try to pull the offensive player's flag.

https://youtu.be/t_f4zhcKKXg

NFL Flag Coaching Resources/Drills/Plays

<https://nflflag.com/coaches/football-drills>

CYO inspires young people to know God, to love God, and to serve God through athletics.