



HEADS UP FOOTBALL

PLAYER SAFETY COACH YOUTH TRAINING CURRICULUM





WELCOME

Dear Player Safety Coach:

Thank you for your commitment to serve in this important role within USA Football's Heads Up Football® program. You and your organization are to be commended for adopting Heads Up Football to provide a better, safer experience for your players and their parents.

Continued evolution is football's legacy. The sport's history is steeped in improvement and progress, and its future holds that same promise.

You hold a significant responsibility as a Player Safety Coach. You will lead a comprehensive teaching approach to instill the highest standards of instruction while creating a model for other sports to emulate.

USA Football's Heads Up Football program focuses on eight key areas:

- **Coaching certification.** All coaches within your program are required to complete the USA Football Level 1 online certification course at usafootball.com which trains them in important health and safety issues along with the game's fundamentals.
- **Equipment fitting.** Particularly the proper fitting of the helmet and shoulder pads.
- **Concussion recognition and response.** Employing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention protocols.
- **Heat preparedness and hydration.** Establishing approved protocols from the Korey Stringer Institute at the University of Connecticut.
- **Sudden cardiac arrest.** Having plans and procedures in place in case of cardiac events.
- **Heads Up Tackling.** Teaching the fundamentals of this all-player skill in a safer way. USA Football has added a more advanced progression for high school varsity players.
- **Heads Up Blocking.** Teaching the fundamentals of contact for offensive players without the ball.
- **Player Safety Coach.** Appointed by your organization, you will ensure compliance with Heads Up Football player safety protocols, coach certification and continuing education with coaches, players and parents.

Of course, this is only achieved through the selfless player-first commitment made by you, your commissioner and your board. We greatly appreciate your leadership and inspired service to further strengthen our game for the betterment of your players and their families.

Regards,

Scott Hallenbeck
CEO

Carl Peterson
Chairman



AGENDA

8:00 A.M.

WELCOME

- A. Introduction
- B. Need for Heads Up Football
- C. Components of Heads Up Football
- D. Player Safety Coach Roles & Steps

8:20 A.M.

HEADS UP FOOTBALL POLICY AND PRACTICE

- A. Equipment Fitting
- B. Concussion Recognition and Response
- C. Emergency Action Planning
 - a. Exertional Heat Stroke
 - b. Sudden Cardiac Arrest
- D. Acclimatization
- E. Practice Guidelines

9:40 A.M.

BREAK/TRANSITION

9:50 A.M.

ON FIELD COACHING

- A. Heads Up Tackling Fundamentals
- B. Heads UP Blocking Fundamentals

11:20 A.M.

BREAK/TRANSITION

11:30 A.M.

HEADS UP FOOTBALL EXECUTION

- A. Steps to Implement
 - a. Coaches Certified
 - b. Head Coaches Clinic
 - c. Parent Safety Meeting
 - d. Monitor and Guide
- B. Dashboard, Tools and Resources Execution

12:00 P.M.

CONCLUDE



THE COMPONENTS OF YOUTH HEADS UP FOOTBALL

KEY FEATURES OF HEADS UP FOOTBALL

COACH CERTIFICATION

USA Football coach certification gives you access to nationally accredited courses with content created from leading football experts and health professionals. Coaches with current USA Football certification are eligible for coaching insurance benefits.

PLAYER SAFETY COACH (PSC)

Your organization's PSC is responsible for ensuring your league is in compliance with Heads Up Football® health and safety protocols including coaching certification. They also play a vital role in monitoring and guiding coaches throughout the season.

EDUCATION COMPONENTS OF HEADS UP FOOTBALL

CONCUSSION RECOGNITION & RESPONSE

Education is the first step to help protect players from concussion. Heads Up Football provides coaches and parents with resources developed by the CDC to know what to look for on the field and how to respond to concussion symptoms.

HEAT PREPAREDNESS & HYDRATION

Keeping athletes hydrated and prepared to play in the heat is important. Receive targeted education on prevention, recognition and treatment on all aspects of heat and hydration.

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST

Sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of fatalities during exercise for U.S. children and teens. Heads Up Football provides instruction on how to have plans and procedures in place in case of a cardiac event.

PROPER EQUIPMENT FITTING

Learn how to properly fit helmets and shoulder pads. Improperly fitted equipment can increase the chance for injury.

HEADS UP TACKLING & BLOCKING TECHNIQUE

Teaching the proper fundamentals of blocking and tackling is essential to making football better and safer. USA Football's Heads Up Tackling and Blocking progressions deliver consistent terminology and a series of drills to teach youth players to play with their head and eyes up and reduce helmet contact.





2016 YOUTH HEADS UP FOOTBALL CHECKLIST

Heads Up Football is a USA Football initiative to make our sport better and safer. It is a comprehensive array of resources to advance player health and safety through education and nationally endorsed standards. The first step to the Heads Up Football program is for the league to

require all coaches to complete USA Football's Level 1 Tackle Coach Certification online course. In addition, USA Football will train one player safety coach in-person per league to prepare them to train their coaching staff and ensure that Heads Up Football's components are employed league-wide.

KEY FEATURES



Coaching Education & Certification



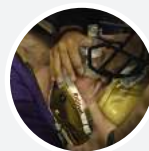
Player Safety Coach (PSC)



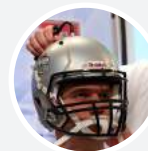
Concussion Recognition & Response



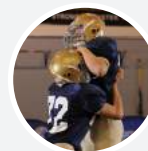
Heat Preparedness & Hydration



Sudden Cardiac Arrest



Proper Equipment Fitting



Heads Up Tackling & Blocking Technique

EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS

YOUTH COMMISSIONER CHECKLIST

- ☐ Complete online registration: <http://usafootball.com/headsup/>
 - ☐ Electronically sign Terms & Conditions
 - ☐ Nominate Player Safety Coach (Nominee must attend in-person, 4-hour PSC Clinic annually)
 - ☐ Upload Certificate of Insurance listing Heads Up Football, LLC as additionally insured
 - ☐ Maintain minimums of \$1 Million General Liability and \$25,000 Accident & Health insurance
 - ☐ Distribute Level 1 Tackle Certification promo code(s) from USA Football to all coaches
- ☐ All coaches register for a USA Football online account
- ☐ All coaches complete Level 1 Tackle Certification annually (\$10 per coach). Certification courses include: Fundamentals of Coaching, Player Health & Safety, Blocking and Tackling Skills
- ☐ All head coaches attend Heads Up Coaches Clinic led by Player Safety Coach
- ☐ Parents and players attend Heads Up Parent Safety Meeting led by Player Safety Coach or their teams' head coaches
- ☐ Track program adoption: http://www2.usafootball.com/heads_up_football/status

YOUTH PLAYER SAFETY COACH CHECKLIST

- ☐ Register for a USA Football online account
- ☐ Complete Level 1 Tackle Certification (Strongly recommended prior to attending PSC Clinic)
- ☐ Register and attend PSC Clinic annually: <http://www2.usafootball.com/schools/browse/psclinics>
- ☐ Conduct Heads Up Coaches Clinic for all head coaches
- ☐ Assist head coaches in conducting Heads Up Parent Safety Meeting for all parents and players
- ☐ Serve as local organization expert on player health and safety by attending games and practices and reinforce Heads Up Football training by mentoring coaches and players throughout the season
- ☐ Review Heads Up Football curriculum and track program adoption: http://www2.usafootball.com/heads_up_football/dashboard



**HEADS UP
FOOTBALL**

STEPS TO IMPLEMENT

CONTENT AREAS

Concussion awareness | Equipment fitting | Heads Up Tackling | Heads Up Blocking
Heat and hydration | Sudden cardiac arrest | Coaching education

STEP 1 — LEAGUE PSC GETS TRAINED

- ☐ Player Safety Coach completes online certification
- ☐ Player Safety Coach attends in-person clinic hosted by a USA Football Master Trainer

STEP 2 — CERTIFY ALL COACHES IN LEAGUE

- ☐ League coaches complete USA Football's online certification course
Youth = Level 1 certification or re-certification

STEP 3 — COACHES CLINIC

- ☐ Player Safety Coach conducts Heads Up Coaches Clinic and ensures all coaches have completed their required certification

STEP 4 — EDUCATE PARENTS AND PLAYERS

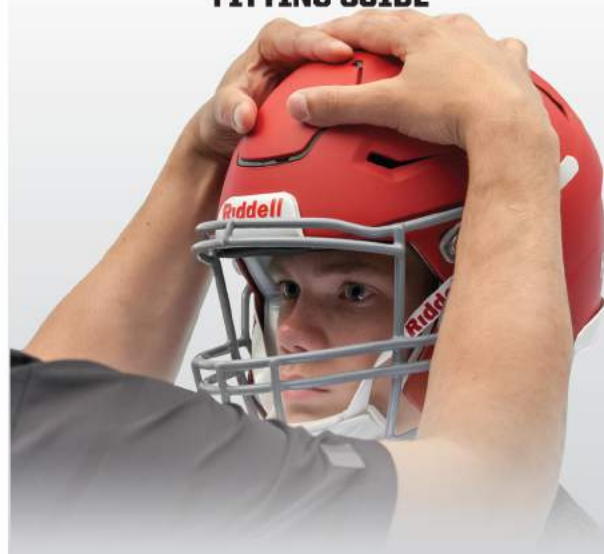
- ☐ Coaches conduct Heads Up Safety Meeting with parents
- ☐ Introduce Heads Up Football
- ☐ Instill confidence in all
- ☐ Free parent/player membership

STEP 5 — PSC GUIDES AND MONITORS COACHES

- ☐ Reinforce training and mentor leagues' coaches throughout the season
- ☐ Utilize the assessment tool to ensure coaches are putting Heads Up training to use

FOOTBALL HELMET

FITTING GUIDE



Riddell
PROTECT AND PERFORM

USA
FOOTBALL

1. CHECKING HEAD SIZE



- Wrap a cloth measuring tape around the circumference of head
- Measure with tape approximately 1" above the player's eyebrows
- Record measurement
- Use the Riddell® circumference chart below to select proper helmet size
 - If measurement falls between helmet sizes, choose the smaller size

2. PUTTING ON / TAKING OFF HELMET



Putting on helmet:

- Hold helmet with thumbs over bottom of jaw pads
- Place index fingers into ear holes
- Pull helmet down into position

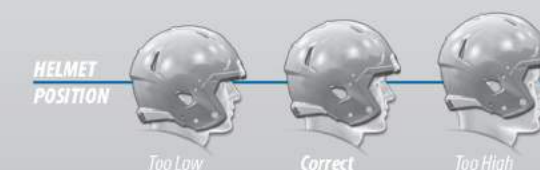
Taking off helmet:

- Unbuckle chin strap from bottom snaps
- Place index fingers into ear holes
- Press thumbs into bottom of jaw pads
- Lift helmet up and off the head

3. ADJUSTING HELMET HEIGHT



- Adjust inflatable pads using a Riddell inflation bulb and a well-lubricated Riddell inflation needle
- Insert needle
- Pump Riddell inflation bulb to achieve proper height
- Remove needle
- Front of helmet should be approximately 1" above the player's eyebrows



4. ADJUSTING BACK/SIDE LINER



- Inflate for snug, comfortable fit front-to-back and side-to-side

5. ADJUSTING JAW PADS



- Jaw pads should feel firm against the face
- Insert needle into valve at exterior jaw flap
- Inflate jaw pad
- If non-inflatable jaw pads feel loose, change to a thicker size
- If non-inflatable jaw pads feel tight, change to a thinner size

6. CHECKING FOR PROPER FIT



- The skin of the forehead should move with the front pad
 - There should be no room for twisting
- If helmet slides easily over the forehead, inflate helmet liners or try a smaller helmet
- Ensure a proper fit:
 - Interlock hands on top of helmet and press down
 - Player should feel pressure on crown of head, not brow
 - Pressure on brow indicates improper fit
 - Front of helmet should be approximately 1" above the eyebrows
- To avoid injury or discomfort, never wear a helmet positioned too high or too low

7. ADJUSTING CHIN STRAP



To adjust chin straps:

- Buckle top and bottom of chin strap into the snaps above and below ear holes
 - Cup should be centered and snug over chin
 - Adjust chin strap until cup is firmly pressed against chin
- When buckled, helmet should feel comfortable and snug
- Chin straps are available in multiple sizes & styles

VARSITY & YOUTH: Riddell SpeedFlex™, Speed, 360, Speed Classic, Foundation, SpeedFlex Youth, Speed Youth, 360 Youth, Speed Classic Youth

HELMET SIZES	Small	Medium	Large	X-Large
HAT SIZE	up to 6 1/2	6 1/2 - 7	7 - 7 1/2	7 1/2 and up
CIRCUMFERENCE	up to 20 3/8"	20 3/8" - 22"	22" - 23 1/2"	23 1/2" and up

YOUTH: Riddell Edge, Riddell Victor

HELMET SIZES	2X-Small	X-Small	Small	Medium	Large	X-Large
HAT SIZE	6 1/8 - 6 1/4	6 3/8 - 6 1/2	6 5/8 - 6 3/4	6 7/8 - 7	7 1/8 - 7 1/4	7 3/8 - 7 1/2
CIRCUMFERENCE	19 1/4" - 19 5/8"	20" - 20 3/8"	20 3/4" - 21 1/4"	21 5/8" - 22"	22 3/8" - 22 3/4"	23 1/8" - 23 1/2"

YOUTH: Riddell Victor-i

HELMET SIZES	XXS/XS	SM/MD	LG/XL
HAT SIZE	6 1/8 - 6 1/2	6 5/8 - 7	7 1/8 - 7 1/2
CIRCUMFERENCE	19 1/4" - 20 3/8"	20 3/4" - 22"	22 3/8" - 23 1/2"

For further helmet fitting guidelines, videos and in-depth details go to:

RIDDELL.COM

SHOULDER PAD

FITTING GUIDE



Riddell
PROTECT AND PERFORM

USA
FOOTBALL

1. MEASURE CHEST



- Wrap measuring tape around upper torso
- Record measurements

2. MEASURE SHOULDERS



- Stretch tape over contour of shoulders (As shown above)
- Measure from tip of left humerus to tip of right humerus
- Record measurements

3. SELECT PADS / PUT ON PADS



- Select pads:
- Identify player position and select corresponding Riddell® pad style
 - Use the Riddell® pad chart below to select proper pad size
- Put on pads:
- Bring pads down over head
 - Be careful of eyes and nose

4. SECURE STRAPS



- Buckle belts and connect elastic straps (if applicable)
- Establish tight fit in chest and back area

5. CHECK FOR PROPER FIT



- Ensure there is no pinching in collar

6. ENSURE COVERAGE IN FRONT



- Pads should cover sternum
- Pads should cover front-upper shoulders

7. ENSURE COVERAGE IN BACK



- Confirm coverage
- Confirm optimal range of motion

FLAT PADS: Professional / College / Varsity

PAD SIZES	Small	Medium	Large	X-Large	2X-Large	3X-Large	4X-Large	5X-Large	6X-Large
SHOULDER WIDTH	17" - 18"	18" - 19"	19" - 20"	20" - 21"	21" - 22"	22" - 23"	23" - 24"	24" - 25"	25" - 26"
CHEST CIRCUMFERENCE	38" - 40"	42" - 44"	46" - 48"	48" - 50"	50" - 52"	52" - 54"	54" - 56"	56" - 58"	58" - 60"

FLAT PADS: Junior Varsity

PAD SIZES	2X-Small	X-Small	Small	Medium	Large	X-Large
SHOULDER WIDTH	13" - 14"	14" - 15"	15" - 16"	16" - 17"	17" - 18"	18" - 19"
CHEST CIRCUMFERENCE	30" - 32"	32" - 44"	34" - 36"	36" - 38"	38" - 40"	40" - 42"

FLAT PADS: Youth

PAD SIZES	X-Small	Small	Medium	Large	X-Large	2X-Large	3X-Large
SHOULDER WIDTH	10" - 11"	11" - 12"	12" - 13"	13" - 14"	14" - 15"	15" - 16"	16" - 17"
WEIGHT RECOMMENDATION	40 lbs.	60 lbs.	80 lbs.	100 lbs.	130 lbs.	150 lbs.	170 lbs.

* These charts are only guides. Athletes' measurements, shoulder pad sizes, and actual fit may vary.

For further helmet fitting guidelines, videos and in-depth details go to: RIDDELL.COM

POLICY AND PRACTICE

EQUIPMENT FITTING

1 Who measures (with a cloth tape) the athletes in your league/club/ team for helmet and shoulder pads?

2 How were they taught how to properly fit equipment?

3 How are the measurements recorded? How is equipment handed out and size recorded?

4 Are coaches instructed on inseason checks and proper maintenance?

5 What responsibilities are parents given?

6 Who are they instructed to bring issues too?

CONCUSSION FACT SHEET FOR COACHES



WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

Concussion, a type of traumatic brain injury, is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth—literally causing the brain to bounce around or twist within the skull.

This sudden movement of the brain causes stretching and tearing of brain cells, damaging the cells and creating chemical changes in the brain.

HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

Concussions can result from a fall or from athletes colliding with each other, the ground, or with an obstacle, such as a goalpost. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

As a coach you are on the front line in identifying an athlete with a suspected concussion. You know your athletes well and can recognize when something is off—even when the athlete doesn’t know it or doesn’t want to admit it.

So to help spot a concussion, you should watch for and ask others to report the following two things:

1. A forceful bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.

AND

2. Any concussion signs or symptoms, such as a change in the athlete’s behavior, thinking, or physical functioning.

Signs and symptoms of concussion generally show up soon after the injury. But the full effect of the injury may not be noticeable at first. For example, in the first few minutes the athlete might be slightly confused or appear a little bit dazed, but an hour later they can’t recall coming to the practice or game.

You should repeatedly check for signs of concussion and also tell parents what to watch out for at home. Any worsening of concussion signs or symptoms indicates a medical emergency.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Athletes who experience one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below, or who report that they just “don’t feel right,” after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, may have a concussion.

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE:

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not “feeling right” or is “feeling down”

SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of 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 hit or fall
- Can’t recall events after hit or fall

[INSERT YOUR LOGO]

WHAT ARE CONCUSSION DANGER SIGNS?

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in an athlete with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take the athlete to the emergency department right away if after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body the athlete exhibits one or more of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless, or agitated
- Has unusual behavior
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

FACTS

Sometimes people wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Some athletes may also try to hide their symptoms.

Don't let your athlete convince you that he or she is "just fine" or that he or she can "tough it out." Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Emphasize to athletes and parents that playing with a concussion is dangerous.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED?

No matter whether the athlete is a key member of the team or the game is about to end, an athlete with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from play. To help you know how to respond, follow the Heads Up four-step action plan:

1. REMOVE THE ATHLETE FROM PLAY.

Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, sit them out!

2. ENSURE THAT THE ATHLETE IS EVALUATED BY AN APPROPRIATE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:

- Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
- Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
- Any memory loss immediately following the injury
- Any seizures immediately following the injury
- Number of previous concussions (if any)

3. INFORM THE ATHLETE'S PARENTS OR GUARDIANS.

Let them know about the possible concussion and give them the Heads Up fact sheet for parents. This fact sheet can help parents monitor the athlete for sign or symptoms that appear or get worse once the athlete is at home or returns to school.

4. KEEP THE ATHLETE OUT OF PLAY.

An athlete should be removed from play the day of the injury and until an appropriate health care professional says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. After you remove an athlete with a suspected concussion from practice or play, the decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision.



WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT CONCUSSIONS?

Most athletes with a concussion will recover quickly and fully. But for some athletes, signs and symptoms of concussion can last for days, weeks, or longer.

If an athlete has a concussion, his or her brain needs time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short time period (hours, days, weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling or permanent brain damage. It can even be fatal.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults.
- Athletes who have ever had a concussion are at increased risk for another concussion.
- All concussions are serious.
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

HOW CAN I HELP ATHLETES TO RETURN TO PLAY GRADUALLY?

An athlete should return to sports practices under the supervision of an appropriate health care professional. When available, be sure to work closely with your team's certified athletic trainer.

Below are five gradual steps that you and the health care professional should follow to help safely return an athlete to play. Remember, this is a gradual process. These steps should not be completed in one day, but instead over days, weeks, or months.

BASELINE:

Athletes should not have any concussion symptoms. Athletes should only progress to the next level of exertion if they do not have any symptoms at the current step.

STEP 1:

Begin with light aerobic exercise only to increase an athlete's heart rate. This means about 5 to 10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking, or light jogging. No weight lifting at this point.

STEP 2:

Continue with activities to increase an athlete's heart rate with body or head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weightlifting (reduced time and/or reduced weight from your typical routine).

STEP 3:

Add heavy non-contact physical activity, such as sprinting/running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine, non-contact sport-specific drills (in 3 planes of movement).

STEP 4:

Athlete may return to practice and full contact (if appropriate for the sport) in controlled practice.

STEP 5:

Athlete may return to competition.

If an athlete's symptoms come back or she or he gets new symptoms when becoming more active at any step, this is a sign that the athlete is pushing him or herself too hard. The athlete should stop these activities and the athlete's health care provider should be contacted. After more rest and no concussion symptoms, the athlete should begin at the previous step.

HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT CONCUSSIONS OR OTHER SERIOUS BRAIN INJURIES?

Insist that safety comes first. To help minimize the risks for concussion or other serious brain injuries:

- Ensure that athletes follow the rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure the athlete wears the right protective equipment for their activity. Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Wearing a helmet is a must to reduce the risk of severe brain injury and skull fracture. However, a helmet doesn't make an athlete immune to concussion. There is no "concussion-proof" helmet.

Check with your league, school, or district about concussion policies. Concussion policy statements can be developed to include:

- The school or league's commitment to safety
- A brief description of concussion
- Information on when athletes can safely return to school and play.

Parents and athletes should sign the concussion policy statement at the beginning of the season.



▶ **"WHEN IN DOUBT,
SIT THEM OUT!"**

[INSERT YOUR LOGO]



JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT  www.facebook.com/CDCHeadsUp

TO LEARN MORE GO TO >> WWW.CDC.GOV/CONCUSSION

Content Source: CDC's Heads Up Program. Created through a grant to the CDC Foundation from the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE).

POLICY AND PRACTICE

CONCUSSION

1 Who can remove an athlete
From play?

2 Who is responsible for
evaluating the athlete on
the field?

3 How is potential injury
communicated to parents?

4 For return to play, what type of
medical professional can clear
an athlete post-concussion?

5 A. Who collects the doctor's
clearance notes?
B. How are they stored/filed?

6 A. Do you have a Progressive
Return to Play policy?
B. Who oversees the
PRP activities?



SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST

While other injuries receive more attention, sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is the No. 1 cause of death¹ for youth and teen athletes during sports. With proper preparation and training, school and league administrators can greatly reduce tragic outcomes when an incident occurs.

Sudden cardiac arrest is not the same as a heart attack. It is the result of structural or electrical disorders in the heart that lead to a lethal arrhythmia. Structural disorders can be heart muscle diseases such as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, where the heart muscle becomes unnaturally thick, making it more prone to arrhythmias and harder to pump blood. Sometimes the heart is structurally normal, but electrical impulses in the heart become abnormal, leading to SCA.

Through preseason medical checks and regular doctor's visits, parents and coaches sometimes have advanced knowledge of an athlete's heart disorder. However, one of the main challenges for parents and the medical community is that the majority of young athletes who suffer sudden cardiac arrest on the playing field have no warning symptoms. The first sign of their heart condition could be collapse during exercise and the cardiac arrest itself.

? — What can parents and leagues do to help prevent sudden cardiac arrest?

It is important to recognize that no screening program is perfect. Screening certainly can identify some individuals at risk, and because of that it is recommended that young athletes be examined by a doctor before participating in sports. At the high school and college levels, athletes are required to have a pre-participating sports physical. Ideally, a comprehensive cardiac screen aimed at detecting heart disorders at risk of SCA should contain:

- ✓ Comprehensive physical evaluation
- ✓ Comprehensive symptom and family heart health history such as:
 - Passing out with exercise
 - Heart related death(s) in a relative before the age 40
- ✓ Electrocardiogram (EKG) screening
 - Performed by qualified medical professionals knowledgeable in modern standards for EKG interpretation in athletes

It also is of paramount importance that adults supervising youth athletes during sports be prepared to respond to someone who collapses in sudden cardiac arrest.

? — Why is it important to have a defibrillator available at all athletic events?

Putting an automated external defibrillator (AED) in schools and youth sports settings is a public safety measure. You may use it to save a child's life, but these devices also can be used to save the life of an adult – a coach, teacher or spectator. USA Football recommends that all youth practice and game fields have an AED available nearby and accessible to team personnel. Members of your team or league staff should receive formal training on how to operate the device.



When AEDs become more accessible, it becomes safer for everyone. While formal training is recommended, just having access to an AED increases the likelihood of bystander CPR and response. Eventually, defibrillators should be like fire extinguishers. We only use them in emergencies, but we know there is one close by if we need it.



How can coaches and parents tell the difference between sudden cardiac arrest and a player collapsing because of exhaustion or other causes?

Any child who collapses and is unresponsive on the playing field should be assumed to be in cardiac arrest until proven otherwise. About 50 percent² of young athletes with sudden cardiac arrest will have brief seizure-like activity with arm or leg jerking movements. People think it's just a seizure, but it's really SCA.

An athlete passing out during exercise is not normal. If an athlete collapses while running and is unconscious without any recent trauma, you have to assume cardiac arrest. Some athletes may have warning symptoms of a heart condition, such as:

- ☒ Chest pain
- ☒ A racing heart when it shouldn't
- ☒ Prior episodes of passing out
- ☒ Shortness of breath that is disproportionate to the level of exertion

A child who normally has no problem keeping up with his or her peers but is suddenly struggling could be showing warning signs.

REMEMBER: The majority of SCA cases occur with no warning signs. That is why assuming SCA first in a downed athlete is of vital importance.

PLAN AHEAD

Every youth football organization should develop an emergency action plan, including these steps to address sudden cardiac arrest:

- ☒ The location of AEDs at your practice and game fields
- ☒ A mechanism to call 9-1-1 in case of an emergency during football activities
- ☒ Training in CPR and AED use for designated coaches
- ☒ Defining emergency routes to practice and game facilities and designating personnel to meet and direct emergency responders from the entrance to the individual
- ☒ Designate personnel to stay with the child to the hospital if a parent or guardian is not present
- ☒ Player/parent phone numbers should be available and personnel designated to contact the parents if one is not present

It is critical to practice and review your emergency response during the preseason with all personnel who may be involved in the emergency action plan.

TREATMENT



What should coaches and parents should do if they suspect sudden cardiac arrest?

Call 9-1-1.

Then as soon as possible, begin hands only CPR with chest compressions and have someone close by get the AED if there is one available. Apply the AED as soon as possible and follow the voice prompts and instructions.

Treatment of SCA begins with early recognition. The American Heart Association outlines four steps in a “Chain of Survival” for SCA emergencies:

- ☒ Early recognition of the emergency and calling 9-1-1
- ☒ Early CPR
- ☒ Early defibrillation with an AED
- ☒ Early life support and cardiovascular care at a hospital

AEDs are safe, easy to use and provide voice and visual instructions so anyone can use them effectively if needed.

If you do these things, you have drastically improved your chance of saving someone who is in a life-threatening situation.

NOTE: If football shoulder pads are present, they can be cut and opened or removed to expose the chest.

It is also important to minimize interruptions in chest compressions both before and after defibrillation. This is why one adult is assigned to start CPR while a second person retrieves the AED.

Planning ahead can be the difference between life and death, so please train and practice the steps in your plan and ensure access to a defibrillator.

¹ Harmon KG, Asif IM, Klossner D, Drezner JA. Incidence of sudden cardiac death in national collegiate athletic association athletes. *Circulation*. 2011;123:1594-1600

²Drezner JA, Rao AL, Heistand J, Bloomingdale MK, Harmon KG. Effectiveness of Emergency Response Planning for Sudden Cardiac Arrest in United States High Schools With Automated External Defibrillators. *Circulation* 2009; 120: 518-525.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

Sudden Cardiac Arrest

1

- A. Do you know the locations of AED on all your practice fields? Game field?
B. If they are behind doors, are they locked? Who has the keys?

2

Who on your staff is trained in CPR?

3

Is anyone specifically AED certified?

4

Who is responsible for calling 9-1-1?

5

Who is responsible for meeting the ambulance at the street entrance?

6

Who is responsible for directing ambulance to the field and the downed person?

7

Who is responsible for removing and overseeing the rest of the team?

8

Who is assigned to stay with child on the way to, and at hospital if parent/guardian is not present?

9

- A. Who is assigned to contact parent/guardian?
B. Do they have all contact information?



**HEADS UP
FOOTBALL**

HEAT PREPAREDNESS & HYDRATION

The beginning of the football season across the country is characterized by hot, August practices and hard work in equipment. But the combination of environment, equipment and intensity can place athletes at risk of heat illness. Heat illnesses represent conditions resulting from heat stress, which can be imposed by a number of factors but usually result from the environment or the body creating this heat load itself. Heat illnesses can range from minor to severe, and, in particular, exertional heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency. Athletes may not realize when they are reaching their limits and continue to push hard at practice. It is important for you as a coach to modify practices to reduce the risk and learn to recognize and manage heat illnesses.



When you take the field, you want to be sure you have done everything you can to protect your athletes from heat illnesses.



How does the body handle heat?

High body temperature decreases exercise performance and is a major risk factor for heat illness. During exercise, working muscles produce heat, which is stored in the body until it can be released into the environment. The environment can add heat to the body through high air temperature and radiant heat from the sun. So the body has to keep itself from storing too much heat while continuing to exercise. Sweating is the body's best way to get rid of heat, via evaporation. As sweat evaporates from the skin, heat is transferred away from the body into the environment. However, as relative humidity increases, the body's ability for sweat to evaporate from the skin decreases, resulting in greater heat storage, load and potential for exertional heat illnesses.

How do I protect my athletes?

The best way to protect your athletes is to modify the risk factors that are responsible for causing heat illness. These risk factors can be classified into two categories: extrinsic (factors outside the athlete's control) and intrinsic (factors unique to the specific athlete). Extrinsic risk factors can be modified by changing practice times, taking off equipment or providing more breaks. Not participating with an illness, maintaining proper hydration and becoming heat acclimatized are all options to decrease intrinsic risk.

What is heat acclimatization, and how can my team do it?

Heat illness is most common during the first five days of practice. An easy way to protect athletes during this time is heat acclimatization. Heat acclimatization takes an average of 10-14 days to get the full benefits but still provides important protective benefits while it's occurring. Heat acclimatization is a series of adaptations that helps the body prepare for exercise in the heat. These changes help the body maintain lower temperature and heart rate, enhance sweating and store more water. The lower heart rate and body temperature means that athletes can exercise longer and at a higher intensity, which lowers the risk for heat illness.

ACHIEVING HEAT ACCLIMATIZATION

Heat acclimatization can be achieved by using the model below.

This is only one example. Consult your state association for laws and policies that apply to schools in your state.



The following is important for understanding the table:

- Practice is defined as time on the football field (including warm-up, stretching, break time, cool down and any conditioning time), and it should never exceed three hours.
- During the first five days, practices should be limited to two hours.
- A walkthrough is defined as time dedicated to reviewing plays and field positions and should not exceed one hour.
- Heat acclimatization days should be continuous if possible, meaning few days off. However, if your practice schedule is only a few days a week, then remember that the days between your practices (the days off) do not count toward acclimatization days. It will take longer to acclimatize in situations like this.

AREA OF PRACTICE MODIFICATION	PRACTICES 1-6		
	Days 1-2	Days 3-4	Practices 5-6
# of Practices Permitted Per Day	1		
Equipment	Helmets only	Helmets & Shoulder Pads	Full Pad (optional)
Maximum Duration of Single Practice Session	90 Minutes	2 hours	
Contact	No Contact		Full contact drills, maximum of 30 minutes per day (optional)

Visit: <http://ksi.uconn.edu/high-school-state-policies/heat-acclimatization-policies/> for a state-by-state breakdown of acclimatization policies.

How do I modify my practice for environmental conditions?

Environmental conditions provide important information about how hard the practice could be on the body. Modifying the length of practice, intensity of practice and the number and lengths of breaks during practice keep athletes safer when conditions are stressful. Wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT) is the best way to determine how stressful the environment is. WBGT is calculated by taking into account air temperature, humidity and radiant energy from the sun. If WBGT is not available, the next best thing is heat index, which is a combination of air temperature and humidity. The chart below is the WBGT policy for Georgia. Check your with your state association for laws and policies that apply to you.

WBGT	ACTIVITY GUIDELINES	REST BREAK GUIDELINES
Under 82.0°F	Normal activities.	Provide at least three separate rests breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 minutes each.
82.0-86.9°F	Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise; watch at-risk players carefully.	Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 minutes each.
87.0-89.9°F	Players are restricted to helmet, shoulder pads and shorts during practice, and all protective equipment must be removed during conditioning activities. If the WBGT rises to this level during practice, players may continue to work out wearing football pants without changing to shorts.	Provide at least four separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 minutes each.
90.0 - 92.0°F	Maximum practice time is 1 hour. No protective equipment may be worn during practice, and there may be no conditioning activities.	There must be 20 minutes of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice.
Over 92.1°F	No outdoor workouts. Delay practice until a cooler WBGT level is reached.	

A NOTE ABOUT THE TABLE

Along with athletes following a heat acclimatization protocol, there will be appropriate access to fluid and rest breaks during exercise, Also note that athletes who are from Georgia are used to higher temperatures. For these reasons, the activity guidelines should be altered based on the region of the country you play in. Check with your state high school athletic association for your state's guidelines.



What types of fluid should I use for hydrating?

Water is the least expensive and most accessible fluid during exercise. Sports drinks contain electrolytes, sugar and water, which give athletes important nutrients during exercise. While water is appropriate during all types of exercise, sports drinks are recommended for use during intense exercise that is greater than 60 minutes or during intense exercise in the heat. Also, children like the taste of sports drinks, so it may lead them to hydrate more than if water is the only available fluid.

When should athletes hydrate?

Before Exercise

- Hydrate with 16-24 oz. of water or a sports drink

During Exercise

- Have unlimited access to water during exercise/activity
- Be able to drink as much as they want
- Be able to drink for the entire break period if they wish
- Access to sports drinks when exercise is greater than 60 minutes or if exercise is going to be intense and in the heat

To achieve this, it's recommended that all exercise sessions should have predetermined breaks approximately every 15 minutes. The timing and length of breaks should be dependent on the environmental conditions. While athletes may be encouraged, or even required, to bring their own fluids, as a coach, always make sure extra fluids are available for those who have forgotten or need to refill their water bottles.

How do I recognize the various exertional heat illnesses, and what can I, as a coach, do to treat my athletes?

	HEAT SYNCOPE	HEAT CRAMPS	HEAT EXHAUSTION
RECOGNITION	Refers to a fainting or lightheadedness episode	Painful, localized muscle cramps and may feel like they are “wandering” throughout the cramping muscle Usually visible and the muscle will feel hard	The inability to continue exercise in the heat from either weakness or exhaustion May feel hot, tired, sweating a lot, weak, dizzy and don’t feel able to continue exercise
CAUSES	Lack of heat acclimatization and poor fitness Blood pools in the lower extremities, reducing the heart’s ability to provide enough circulation	Combination of fatigue, dehydration and electrolyte losses through sweat Lack of heat acclimatization and poor fitness	Caused by either excessive fluid losses or electrolyte losses Dehydration causes less blood to be available for the working muscles and the skin to give off heat
TREATMENT	Lay the athlete on the ground and raise the legs about 12 inches This helps blood go back to the heart to normalize blood pressure	Rehydration with water and sport drinks Some light stretching or massage with ice on the cramping muscle	Remove the athlete from activity and put him or her in a shaded/ cool area Lay the athlete on the ground and raise the legs about 12 inches Replenish lost fluids Moderate cooling methods, such as ice towels, misting fans or cold water immersion
PREVENTION	Heat acclimatization	Arrive to practice well-hydrated and having consumed some salt with the last meal Minimize fluid losses during exercise and replace lost fluids post exercise Heat acclimatization	Heat acclimatization Arriving to practice/competition well-hydrated Minimizing fluid losses during activity and replace fluid losses after exercise
RETURN TO PLAY	The athlete should feel better within a few minutes, and full recovery is usually quick (within hours) Return to activity once the athlete feels better and is adequately hydrated	Once cramps resolve Without replacing lost fluids, risk of additional cramps is high	Should not return to activity on the same day Complete recovery usually takes 24-48 hours and must focus on rehydration and rest

IMPORTANT

If an athlete needs to go to the hospital, have him cool off first and transport him second. Rapid cooling on-site while waiting for transport to the hospital is a key to survival of an exertional heat stroke without medical staff.

EXERTIONAL HEAT STROKE (EHS)

What is exertional heat stroke?

Exertional heat stroke occurs when the body reaches temperatures above 104°F and there is obvious central nervous system (CNS) dysfunction. CNS dysfunction can include any of the following: dizziness, collapse, confusion, irrational behavior, hysteria, aggressiveness, combativeness, disorientation, seizures and coma.

It is a medical emergency.

What is the cause of EHS?

When the body is unable to give off heat fast enough, heat is stored and core body temperature continues to rise.

How do I treat someone suspected of EHS?

If EHS is suspected in an athlete, immediate action is imperative in order to maximize the chance of survival.

EMS (9-1-1) should be called immediately. Aggressive cooling of the entire body should be done to lower the athlete's core body temperature as fast as possible. Whole-body, cold-water immersion is the best treatment for EHS because it cools the body the fastest. If this is unavailable, then any attempts to cool the body through continual dousing of water (shower, running a hose over the entire body while covering the body with iced towels) should be done before EMS arrives to take the athlete to the hospital.

4. How do I prevent EHS?

There are multiple ways in which you can help prevent the occurrence of EHS:

- Having your athletes undergo a period of heat acclimatization
- Encouraging athletes to come to practice hydrated
- Allowing athletes unlimited access to hydration during activity
- Modifying practice when environmental conditions become extreme (allowing additional rest/hydration breaks, reducing the intensity of practice, reducing the time of practice, and reducing the equipment worn during practice)
- Practicing at an intensity that is appropriate for the fitness level
- Encourage your athletes to speak up when they do not feel well - create a culture where this is considered smart.



For more information, visit
www.usafootball.com/headsup or www.ksi.uconn.edu

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

Exertional Heat Stroke

1

- A. Do you have an immersion tub?
B. If not, what are your planned cooling methods?

2

- A. How is ice provided to your location?
B. Who is responsible

3

Where is the nearest water source for either filling the tub or dousing the athlete?

4

Who is responsible for calling 9-1-1?

5

Who is responsible for meeting the ambulance at the street entrance?

6

Who is responsible for directing Ambulance to the field and the downed person?

7

Who is responsible for removing and Overseeing the rest of the team?

8

Who is assigned to stay with child On way to, and at hospital if Parent/guardian is not present?

9

- A. Who is assigned to contact Parent/guardian?
B. Do they have all contact Information?



**HEADS UP
FOOTBALL**

LEVELS OF CONTACT

0 - AIR



Players run a drill unopposed without contact.

1 - BAGS



Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.

2 - CONTROL



Drill is run at assigned speed until the moment of contact. One player is pre-determined the “winner” by the coach. Contact remains above the waist, and players stay on their feet.

3 - THUD



Drill is run at full speed through the moment of contact. No pre-determined “winner.” Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill.

4 - LIVE ACTION



Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground.



NATIONAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH TACKLE FOOTBALL



BACKGROUND

USA Football is committed to advancing player safety to protect the health and well-being of every child. In addition to coaching education, a key element of player health and safety is the responsibility of all coaches to conduct organized practices and teach proper fundamentals in a safer environment. There are approximately 9,300 youth tackle football organizations in the United States. Within these are approximately 2.5 million young athletes who play and 400,000 adults who coach.

PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide youth football organizations (players age 6 to 14) with recommendations to establish consistent methods designed to limit the chance for injury during structured practice sessions. This document provides youth football commissioners and coaches with heat acclimatization guidelines, clear definitions of contact and recommendation on the number of practices per week and time limits on player-to-player full contact.

There is much to be learned about helmet impacts in youth sports. We remain committed to adopting the best evidence-based practices. We recognize that even with the latest research available, there is no clear consensus in this area. Accordingly, we will update these recommendations and guidelines in accordance with the evidence. Ideally, this emerging data will help us understand the potential for long-term adverse cognitive, emotional and/or neurological effects from concussions and/or other repeated head contact without associated symptoms. Based on what is known about concussions today, the guiding principles in developing these recommendations were to reasonably limit head contact and thus concussion risk.

GUIDELINE 1

Implementing a preseason youth football heat acclimatization period

Reported cases of exertional heat stroke (EHS) currently rank among the top-three causes of sport participation fatalities. Setting mandatory guidelines for heat acclimatization provides a vital standard to protect athletes against exertional heat illnesses and possibly save lives. The majority of EHS cases occur during summer workouts when athletes are unprepared to cope with environmental conditions and physiological demands placed upon them. Heat acclimatization guidelines recommend that athletes be introduced slowly to environmental stresses during practice sessions, resulting in a lowered risk for EHS. These guidelines call for a two-week period (10-14 days) when coaches gradually increase the length and intensity of practice and the amount of equipment that can be worn. At all times, athletes should have access to fluids and have periods of rest throughout a practice.

Recommendations include:

1. At no time throughout the preseason or regular season should teams practice more than once per day (No two-a-day practices). Teams should be allowed to practice a maximum of four times per week during the preseason.
2. During practice days 1 and 2 of the heat-acclimatization period, no more than 90 minutes of practice are allowed, a helmet should be the only protective equipment permitted. No form of player-to-player contact should occur during the first two practices.
3. During practice days 3 and 4, two hours of total practice time is allowed. Only helmets and shoulder pads should be worn. No full-contact drills should be allowed. USA Football defines full-contact as drills being run at “Thud” and “Live” tempo. Coaches are encouraged to limit player-to-player contact up to “Control” using USA Football’s Levels of Contact.
4. On practice days 5 and 6, two hours of practice time is allowed which would occur within the second week of a youth organization’s preseason schedule according to these guidelines. Teams have the option to wear full pads and full contact drills can begin and should be utilized within the recommended time allocation discussed below.
5. If a practice is interrupted by inclement weather or heat restrictions on any of the practice days, the practice should resume once conditions are deemed safe.
6. On days when environmental conditions (heat index or WBGT) are extreme, modifications should be made to the work-to-rest ratio (to allow for cool-down periods and rehydration) or rescheduled to cooler parts of the day (i.e. before 10am or after 6pm).

GUIDELINE 2

Ensure all youth coaches understand the definition of “full contact”

Full-contact drills should be limited during the preseason and regular season as the number of exposures may increase the chance for injury to youth players. For purposes of these guidelines, full-contact consists of both “Thud” and “Live Action” using USA Football’s definitions of Levels of Contact.

Rationale: By definition, “Thud” involves initiation of contact at full speed with no predetermined winner, but no take-down to the ground. Initial contact, particularly with linemen, is just as physical with “Thud” as with “Live Action.” USA Football recognizes that “Live Action” likely carries a higher injury risk to the body than does “Thud.” The first three levels of USA Football Levels of Contact “Air,” “Bags,” and “Control” are considered no or controlled-contact, and thus no limitations are placed on their use in practice.

GUIDELINE 3

Recommended number of team practices and amount of “full contact” drills per week

Preseason Recommendation

Following the preseason acclimatization period, it is recommended youth teams conduct no more than four practices per week. Coaches are to limit the amount of full-contact to no more than 30 minutes per day and no more than 120 minutes per week. No two-a-day practices should be allowed at any point throughout the preseason.

Rationale: USA Football recognizes preseason practices may require more full-contact time than practices occurring in the regular season to allow for teaching fundamentals with sufficient repetition to prepare for the season. Coaches are encouraged to introduce contact through a progressive manner to ensure they are using proper technique before full-contact (Thud & Live Action) drills are allowed.

Regular Season Recommendation

Once the regular season begins and games commence, USA Football recommends the number of practices per week is decreased to three to account for the weekly game. Coaches are to limit the amount of full-contact to no more than 30 minutes per day and no more than 90 minutes per week.

Rationale: At this point in the season, games have begun and full-contact exposure rates have increased on a weekly basis for players. To account for this, the recommendation to eliminate one practice per week and decrease the amount of time dedicated to full-contact drills decreases the number of exposures per week.

GUIDELINE 4

Coaches need to use a practice plan and assign a “level of contact” for every drill according to USA Football’s Level of Contact chart

USA Football defines contact using its Levels of Contact chart (see below) to help coaches assign a level of resistance for each drill period within their practice plan.

Properly employing the levels of contact during a football practice is an important skill for youth coaches to learn. This is completed by adjusting the distance between players, the speed at which they conduct a drill and modifying the “winner” of a drill. In doing this, coaches can better accomplish specific teaching objectives during practices and decrease the chance for injury.

Planning when to teach, when to compete and when to adjust contact promotes a better experience for players and coaches. Proper usage of the Levels of Contact system will help players perform their contact skills at a high level while instilling confidence. Employing the Levels of Contact system also helps reduce player fatigue, which can advance player safety.

Explaining Levels of Contact

Levels of Contact focuses on varying intensity levels throughout practices to build player confidence, ensure their safety and prevent both physical and mental exhaustion.

Five intensity levels are used to introduce players to practice drills which position them to master the fundamentals and increase skill development.

CONTACT	INTENSITY	DESCRIPTION
Air	0	Players run a drill unopposed without contact.
Bags	1	Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.
Control	2	Drill is run at assigned speed until the moment of contact; one player is pre-determined the ‘winner’ by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet.
Thud	3	Drill is run at assigned speed to competitive speed through the moment of contact; no pre-determined “winner.” Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill.
Live Action	4	Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground.

Practice Plan Example Within 30-Minute Full Contact Allocation



My Team

ADD TEAM

Logout

Week 1 - Dec 30-Jan 05

Practice Day

12+

Template

Save as template



Activity	Duration	Contact	Attachments	Mt.	Fav.	Del.
1 Position Fundamentals	15 min	Bags	 Drag your attachment here			
2 Heads Up Tackle Circuit	10 min	Thud (Full Contact)	 Drag your attachment here			
3 Water Break	5 min	Air	 Drag your attachment here			
4 Inside Run	10 min	Thud (Full Contact)	 Drag your attachment here			
5 Kickoff / Kick Return	10 min	Control	 Drag your attachment here			
6 Pass Skelly	15 min	Air	 Drag your attachment here			
7 Water Break	5 min	Air	 Drag your attachment here			
8 Team Period	10 min	Thud (Full Contact)	 Drag your attachment here			
+ Add activity	Duration	Level of contact	 Drag your attachment here			

Full Contact Limit

 30 minute limit (recommended)

Practice Plan Example Exceeding 30-Minute Full Contact Allocation



My Team

ADD TEAM

Logout

<

Week 1 - Dec 30-Jan 05

>

Practice Day

1

2

+

Template

Save as template







Activity	Duration	Contact	Attachments	Itt	Fav	Del
1 Dynamic Warmup	10 min	Air	 Drag your attachment here			
2 Position Fundamentals	15 min	Control	 Drag your attachment here			
3 Heads Up Tackle Circuit	10 min	Thud (Full Contact)	 Drag your attachment here			
4 Inside Run	10 min	Thud (Full Contact)	 Drag your attachment here			
5 Punt Team / Punt Return	10 min	Control	 Drag your attachment here			
6 Water Break	5 min	Air	 Drag your attachment here			
7 Pass Skelly	15 min	Control	 Drag your attachment here			
8 Team Period	20 min	Thud (Full Contact)	 Drag your attachment here			
+ Add activity	Duration	Level of contact	 Drag your attachment here			

Full Contact Limit



30 minute limit (recommended)

10 minutes over limit

* USA Football recommends athletes be able to drink fluids at any time during a practice beyond designated breaks.

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PRACTICE GUIDELINES

- 1 Do you have a preseason acclimatization plan?
- 2 Within your state, what is considered full contact?
- 3 How many days per week of full contact is allowed?
- 4 How much time per day is allowed for full contact?
- 5 How much time per week of full contact is allowed?
- 6 Are coaches required to have a practice plan?
- 7 Is a “level of contact” required to be assigned to every drill?
- 8 A. Are these records kept?
Filed? Stored?
B. By whom?



**HEADS UP
FOOTBALL**

HEADS UP BLOCKING

1 - STANCE



The foundational platform for all blocks off the line.

2 - GET OFF



The initial two steps for all blocks. The first step is short positional step and the second is the contact step.

3 - STRIKE



Explosive contact with the hands or surface (front of shoulder, upper arm and forearm) not using the head.

4 - STICK



“Seating” on the block by rolling the hips into the defender while staying low and taking away the opponent’s space.

5 - FINISH



Short, strong and powerful steps with “cleats in the ground” to take the defender backward.



HEADS UP BLOCKING



STANCE

- a) Chin up. Eyes open. Knees bent. Feet shoulder-width apart with a toe-to-instep stagger.
- b) Back flat with rear end slightly below the shoulders.
- c) Hand comfortable down with minimal weight, fingers extended to create a five-pointed base of support.
- d) Weight on balls of the feet keeping heels down. Should be able to slide a piece of paper under heels

NOTES



HEADS UP BLOCKING



GET OFF

- a) Explode out of the stance with a four- to six-inch directional step. Head and eyes up.
- b) Hands explode to chest on “get off” to prepare to strike defender.
- c) Get second step down before contact, always want two feet on ground when engaged. Maintain posture working to second level; keep wide base, head up and flat back.

NOTES



HEADS UP BLOCKING



STRIKE

- a) Depending on the type of block, the blocker will drive the:
 - Surface (front of shoulder, chest and forearm) or
 - Heels of both hands into the defensive player chest plate
- b) Aiming point for an upward strike is just below the base of the defender's shoulder pads.
- c) Goal is to "lift" the defender's chest with pad under pad, raising his center of gravity and controlling him.

NOTES



HEADS UP BLOCKING



STICK

- a) After the strike, forcefully sink the hips to maintain leverage and create a power angle in the lower body.
- b) Create a wide base and use proper balance to stay on the block.
- c) Roll hips into the block while staying compact to take away space between blockers hips and defender.

NOTES



HEADS UP BLOCKING



FINISH

- a) With a wide base, accelerate feet and continue leg drive to capitalize on strike and stick. Weight should be on the instep with “cleats in the ground”. Steps are short and controlled
- b) Continue to work body and hand position during finish phase to stay connected to the defender and maintain sustained control of opponent.
- c) Work hips and hands to steer defender away from point of attack and the ball-carrier’s path.

NOTES



INTRODUCTION TO USA FOOTBALL'S HEADS UP TACKLING FRAMEWORK

USA Football's Heads Up Tackling framework is a key element of the Heads Up Football program as it's a way for coaches to teach, practice and correct proper mechanics for this important all-player skill. Used by thousands of youth and high school teams, this framework lays the foundation for proper tackles in an age-appropriate progression.

Developed in conjunction with USA Football's Medical and Football Advisory Committees, this framework is broken into two distinct phases so that players are learning transferable skills that will help them first strike the ball-carrier with the head and eyes up using the shoulder pads. In the second phase, USA Football has added a roll tackle system similar to the rugby tackle for only advanced high school players who've mastered the phase 1 system.

PHASE 1

WHERE TACKLING INSTRUCTION BEGINS FOR ALL YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS

- An introduction to basic tackling fundamentals that should be reinforced at every stage throughout a player's career
- A step-by-step protocol to teach the core principles utilizing five fundamentals – Breakdown, Buzz, Hit, Shoot, Rip
- Supported by a series of drills to strengthen tackling mechanics and teach players how to tackle
- Head to the side, upward shoulder strike with double uppercuts to grab cloth and take ball-carrier to the ground
- Goal is to execute a proper tackle while reducing helmet contact
- The strike zone of the ball-carrier is between the hips and numbers
- Framework gives coaches the option to teach a shoulder strike with the head behind or head in front

PHASE 2

- This rugby tackle is an advanced technique recommended only for high school varsity players
- Requires a higher rate of physical and mental maturity, including hip, core and upper back strength to maintain proper alignment with head up
- Most useful against ball-carriers with superior size or speed
- Head behind, shoulder strike with "cheek to cheek" to avoid contact with knee or thighs
- Goal is to execute a proper tackle while reducing helmet contact



**HEADS UP
FOOTBALL**

HEADS UP TACKLING®

1 - BREAKDOWN



The foundational starting point for all movements and drills.

2 - BUZZ



Technique for coming to balance and regaining breakdown position prior to contact.

3 - HIT



Correct body posture at moment of impact for safer tackling. Head and eyes are up using the front of shoulder as point of contact.

4 - SHOOT



The opening of the hips to generate power and create an ascending tackle.

5 - RIP



With head to the side and out of contact, throw double uppercuts and grab cloth' on the back of jersey to secure the tackle.



HEADS UP TACKLING DRILLS



BREAKDOWN POSITION

- A** Knees bent, feet shoulder-width apart, upper body in a 45-degree forward lean, chin up and weight on the balls of your feet (not your toes).
- B** Shoulders over knees, knees over toes.
- C** Players must be able to re-gather themselves in a Breakdown Position when buzzing feet
- D** Teach progression:
Feet → Squeeze → Sink → Hands

NOTES



HEADS UP TACKLING DRILLS



BUZZ

- A** Come to balance. Regain lower pad level.
- B** Take quick, choppy, heel-to-heel steps to bring the body under control while continuing to gain ground toward the ball-carrier.
- C** Once the defender is within “striking distance” of the ball-carrier, the defender buzzes his feet while widening his base and sinking his hips.

NOTES



HEADS UP TACKLING DRILLS



HIT POSITION

- A** After closing to the ball-carrier, the final step is a short downhill power step.
- B** Staggered stance with a bend in both knees. With your back foot directly under your hips.
- C** Head and eyes up, shoulders square to contact. Back flat, spine-in-line.

NOTES



HEADS UP TACKLING DRILLS



SHOOT

- A** Forcefully explode your hips open and upward.
- B** Using the larger muscle groups of the lower body produces a powerful tackle.
- C** To finish the tackle, continue to drive your legs while working up and through opponents.

NOTES

HEADS UP TACKLING DRILLS



RIP

- A** Upper body movement to secure tackle.
- B** Forcefully club both arms in an upper-cut motion: “Thumbs up and elbows down.”
- C** After the Rip, secure the tackle by “grabbing cloth” (the back of the ball-carrier’s jersey); you should have your elbows tight to ballcarrier’s sides.

NOTES



HEADS UP TACKLING DRILLS

FUNDAMENTAL DRILLS

1. Breakdown
2. Buzz to Hit
3. Hit Position
4. Shoot
5. Rip Tackle

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

1. Step-Over Tackle
2. Pop-Up Tackle

INTRODUCTION TO CONTACT

1. One Foot Tackle
2. Freeze Tackle

BASICS

1. Straight-On Tackle
2. Angle Tackle
3. Lane Tackle
4. Open Field Tackle

FIX + FOCUS

1. Leverage Tackle
2. Three Rips
3. Grapple Tackle
4. Finish Tackle



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TACKLE CIRCUIT

Integrate this period into your Practice Plan

- ➡ Proper tackling is the most important all-player skills you will teach your players
- ➡ By dedicating a separate period to developing this skill conveys its importance
- ➡ Tackle circuits can be conducted using contact and non-contact drills

BASICS

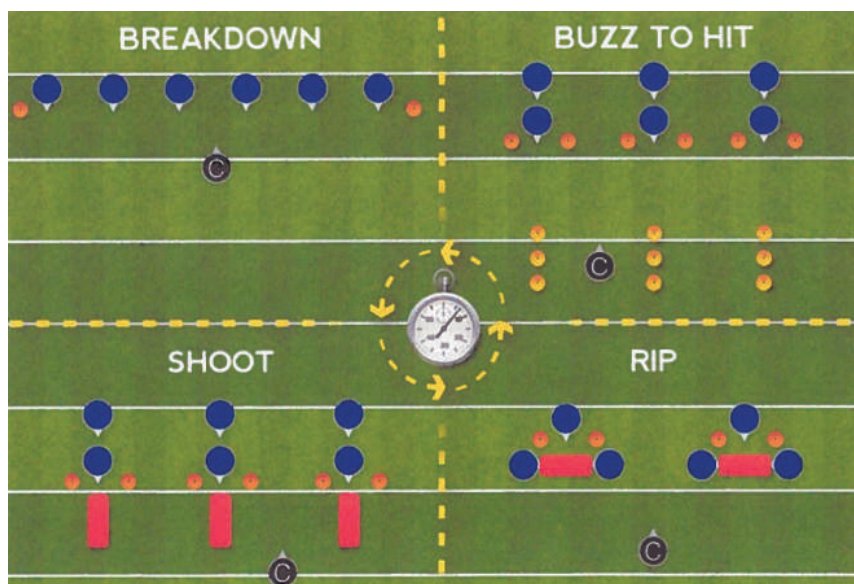
10-20 minutes every practice

Multiple stations

- Maximize number of reps
- Small groups = individual attention
- At least one coach per station

Change levels of contact

- Air, Bags, Control, Thud
- Keep youngsters on their feet





**HEADS UP
FOOTBALL**

TACKLE CIRCUIT

PROGRAMMING

EARLY TO PRESEASON

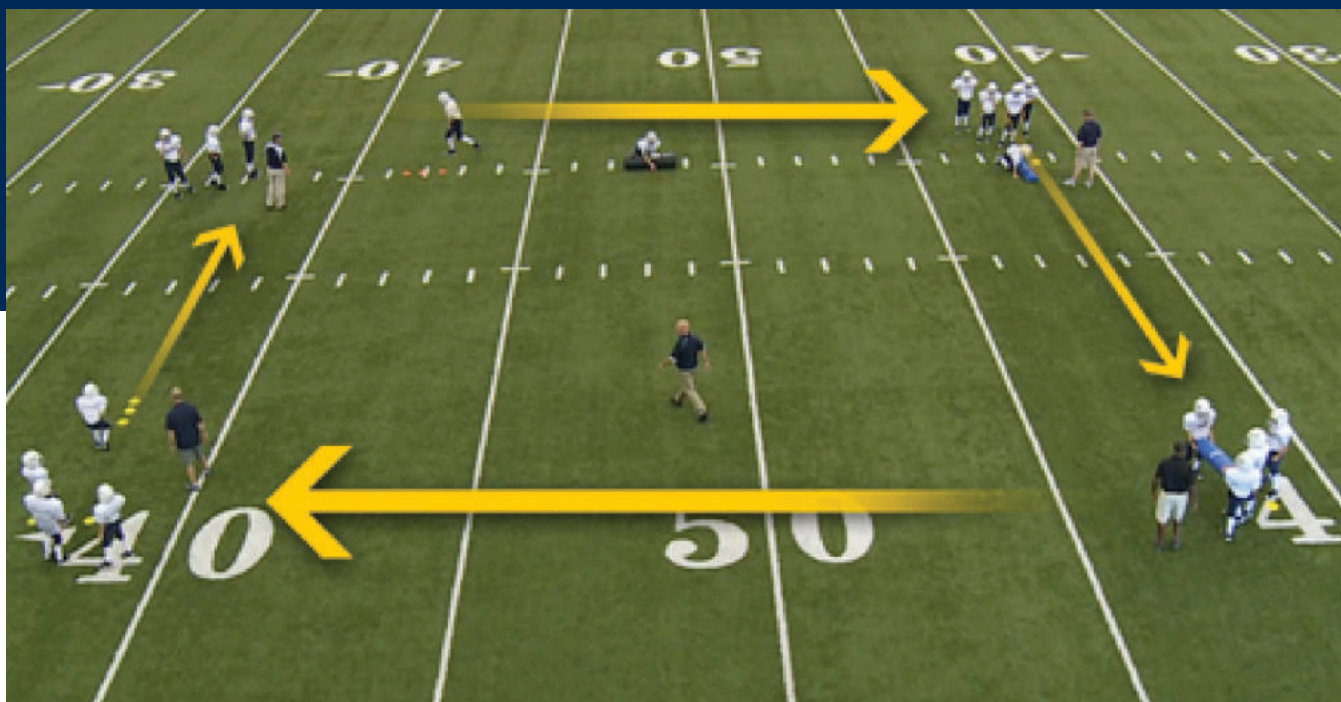
- Instill circuit to create good habits
- Acclimate using different Levels of contact
- Follow a linear skill progression
- Create energy and make it fun!

IN-SEASON

- Different drills at each station
- Focus on multiple skills per session
- In-week contact guidelines
- Seasonal control of contact

TROUBLESHOOTING

- Why players/teams miss tackles?
- Circuit drills as the “fix”
 - Use drill that teaches that fundamental
 - Part-to-whole





MONITORING AND GUIDING COACHES

As the Player Safety Coach (PSC) for your organization, you have the responsibility to educate players, coaches, parents, officials and other volunteers in a variety of safety components.

Having set up and delivered these initial educational opportunities, the final step in Heads Up Football execution is to monitor and guide your coaches throughout the season. To properly monitor your fellow coaches, USA Football has provided a list of resources to support your efforts.

Before undertaking the monitoring and guiding part of your role, ask yourself the following questions:

- How will you know that coaches/parents/players have learned?
- Do you know what an appropriate practice looks like on the field?
- Do you know what you are looking for?
- Do you know how to look?
- Do you know what you will do once you have completed your observation of coaching practice?
- Do you know how you will manage an intervention with the coach?

This worksheet is designed to help you monitor coaches during practice and guide coaches to ensure they are implementing safer football practices. It will assist your observation and analysis skills in order to appraise the quality of coaching, providing a reference point to benchmark your observations against USA Football recommendations. It also will help you think about how you set up and manage interventions with coaches to help them reflect on their coaching style and identify opportunities for improvement.

SAFER PRACTICES ON THE FIELD

Safer practice on the field is the goal of Heads Up Football. Your role as a PSC is critical in achieving that goal.

To ensure safer practices, it is important that you know what it is you are looking for. You must also be able to capture and relay your observations so you can help coaches reflect on how effective they are and plan for future sessions.

Look at the observation checklist on the next page. The left hand column identifies what you would expect to see the coach doing in both the planning and delivery phases of their session to ensure safer practices.

When observing each coach, use this sheet to record whether they are doing each by ticking the yes/no columns. The notes column allows you to record what you know or saw that will help you to support coach reflections and guide their coaching practices. USA Football recommends you conduct observations of each team especially in the preseason to ensure that coaches are using best practice from the outset.

TABLE 1. SAFER PRACTICE IN THE FIELD CHECKLIST

Yes	No		Notes:
☐	☐	Did coach attend Coaches Clinic?	
☐	☐	Did coach check player equipment before practice?	
☐	☐	Are athletes' helmets and shoulder pads fitted properly?	
☐	☐	Do athletes have access to water?	
☐	☐	Do athletes have a water break every 20 min?	
☐	☐	Are drills run at appropriate distances and speeds?	
☐	☐	Are players corrected when they block or tackle incorrectly?	
☐	☐	Do you hear Heads Up Football® Terminology? (Breakdown, Buzz, Hit, Shoot, Rip, Stance, Get Off, Strike, Stick, Finish)	

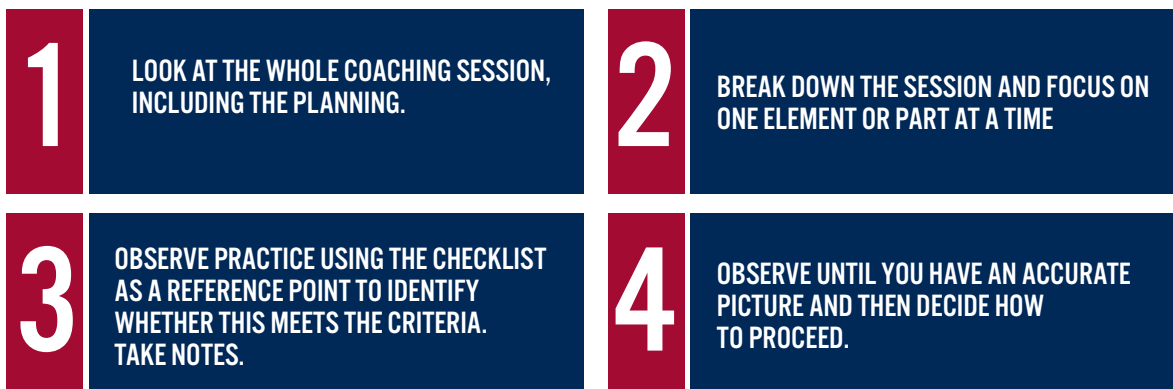
OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS

In order to monitor and guide coaching practice you will need to observe and analyze coaching practice. Any observations should be carried out in agreement with Head Coaches. This means that you will need to notify the Head Coaches in advance of the season that you will be attending their practices and observing their session to analyse how they are ensuring the safety of their players.

When you observe you should spend some quality time watching the session. Your observations should be conducted using USA Football's Safer Checklist as a recommended reference point. Watch the whole session and also focus on specific elements to develop a consistent picture of what is happening from a safety perspective.

Once you have observed properly you are ready to analyse what you have noticed. Consider the idea of a split screen in your head with the safer checklist on one side and the coach's session on the other. You need to identify and reinforce what's working first (matches), and then identify the errors and inconsistencies (mismatches). This is essential, as it will help you decide how to proceed.

As a PSC, the following image might be a useful prompt or reminder when you undertake your observation of the coach in the field:



MANAGING INTERVENTIONS

Having observed, recorded and analysed coaching practices, you now are aware of what the coaches do well. This should be shared and celebrated with them. You also have a sense of what they are doing that is not consistent with best practices.

Your job as the PSC is to help coaches reflect on how they are currently coaching and to help them consider the impact of that behaviour on their players. Remind them of what they did really well before identifying what they are not doing well or what appears to be not working with the players. The aim is to developmentally improve coaching practices and ensure they are as safe as they can be. The goal is not to catch coaches doing things poorly. By analysing their coaching and creating an action plan that helps them develop their coaching, you improve the safety of the league as well as provide youngsters better coaching.

How you manage the intervention is key as your role is to support the coach and help them deliver a better, safer experience for their players. Interventions should be framed positively and supported by your league commissioner. Proper work done ahead of time eases the process for coaches who may feel like their turf is being stepped on.

Below are some best practices you can use to set up and manage the intervention:

- Ensure that the role of the PSC within the organization is shared and all people (coaches, players, parents, officials and commissioners) know who you are and what your job is.
- Establish good working relationships with the coaches. Let them know you care and appreciate their role as a volunteer coach. Be visible amongst the parents and players throughout the season.
- When conducting observations use USA Football's Safer Checklist or an adapted version of this, which meets the specific needs of your organization.

- After you've observed and monitored the practice review your notes so that you are clear on exactly which points you want to discuss and share with the coaching team. Set up a time to explore these with the Head Coach or Coaching Staff after practice away from the player and parents.
- The point of the intervention or meeting is developmental. It is not simply to criticise and identify flaws. The goal is to work together to reinforce areas of practice that are working really well and identify where there are opportunities for improvement and development. Any development points should be recorded in an action plan that can be used for future observations to review practice and chart progress made.
- If you observe something within the session itself such as a health and safety issue you may need to step in. Stepping in should not come as a surprise; this part of your role should have been shared in advance. If immediate change is needed you may need to help the coach transition to a new drill and explore this at the next scheduled break.
- Since the head coach is responsible for the team, work with the head coach who can then change practice with his or her staff. Remember, these coaches are on your team. Help them in a constructive, supportive and positive manner.

** While USA Football encourages all intervention and planning sessions to happen away from parents and players, PSCs may feel the need to step in immediately if player health and safety is an imminent issue.

Carefully consider how you might intervene in this situation. The goal is to ensure health and safety standards, not to embarrass a coach.



Date: _____

League: _____

Club: _____

Head Coach Evaluated: _____

Contact practice (circle):	Yes	No
1. Do you have a contact practice?		
2. If yes, how often do you have a contact practice?		
3. If yes, what is the type of contact practice?		
4. If yes, what is the duration of the contact practice?		
5. If yes, what is the location of the contact practice?		
6. If yes, what is the purpose of the contact practice?		
7. If yes, what is the result of the contact practice?		
8. If yes, what is the feedback of the contact practice?		
9. If yes, what is the evaluation of the contact practice?		
10. If yes, what is the conclusion of the contact practice?		

Yes No

Notes:

-
-
-
-
-
-



**HEADS UP
FOOTBALL**



PLAYER SAFETY COACH CHECKLIST

PLAYER SAFETY COACH EDUCATION

- ☐ Register for USA Football Youth Coach Membership
- ☐ Complete 2016 Level 1 Certification Course
- ☐ Completed USA Football's in-person Player Safety Coach training

COACHES CERTIFICATION

- ☐ Share Coach Membership promo code(s) with coaches allowing them to register and access certification
- ☐ Ensure all coaches have completed 2016 Level 1 Certification Course

EDUCATING YOUR PROGRAM

- ☐ Conduct Heads Up Head Coaches Meeting(s) for head coaches in your league
- ☐ Head coaches are responsible for educating their coaching staffs on the pillars of Heads Up Football
- ☐ Conduct Heads Up Parent Safety Meeting either with a large group or team by team
- ☐ Submit completion of coach and parent meetings via Player Safety Dashboard at www.usafootball.com

ON-FIELD MONITORING

- ☐ Observation of practices
- ☐ Observation of games
- ☐ Coaches incorporate tackle circuit during practices
- ☐ Coaches teach Heads Up Blocking and Tackling
- ☐ Coaches are using Levels of Contact throughout practices

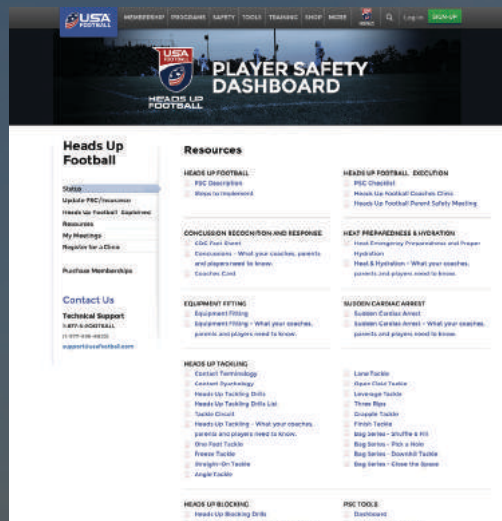


HEADS UP
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PLAYER SAFETY COACH DASHBOARD

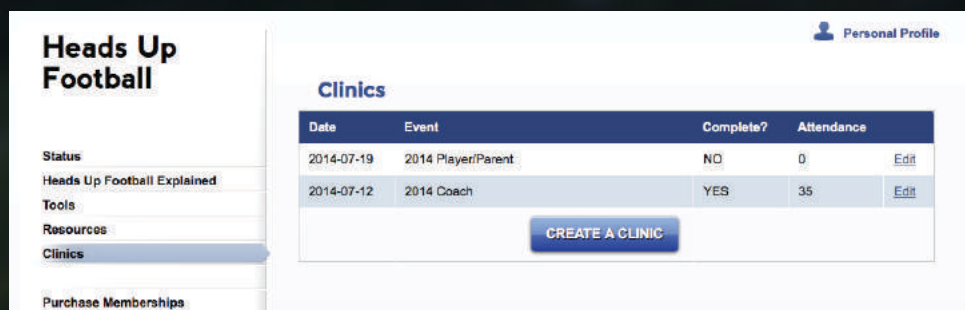
Nominated Player Safety Coaches (PSCs) access the PSC Dashboard by clicking the Player Safety Coach Dashboard box when signed into their Coach Memberships.

The direct link to the PSC Dashboard is:
www2.usafootball.com/heads_up_football/dashboard



The PSC Dashboard is your go-to spot for everything Heads Up Football. Here, PSCs can view Heads Up Tackling and Blocking drills and access resources to promote and explain what participating in Heads Up Football means to their coaches, players, parents and athletic director.

PSCs can document the Heads Up Coaches Clinics and Safety (Player & Parent) Clinics they run while making notes about the events to ensure each coach, parent and player understands the fundamentals of Heads Up Football and goals of your program.





**HEADS UP
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HEAD COACHES CLINIC

Heads Up Football Head Coaches Clinic operations

The goal of the Head Coaches Clinic is to inform head coaches in your organization about how the Heads Up Football program will be applied in your organization.

PSCs should use this opportunity to:

- ensure all coaches have taken their Level 1 Coaching Course,
- have the necessary information to conduct their teams' parents meeting and are aware that ongoing practice monitoring will occur.

Coaches should receive guidance on their organization's commitment to concussion recognition and response, heat preparedness and hydration, sudden cardiac arrest, proper equipment fitting and Heads Up Blocking and Tackling. Coaches should also make mention of the free parent education resources available at usafootball.com and the Parent Safety course, a valuable tool to those new to tackle football.

This is an opportune time to address rules enforcement related to player safety and invite a game official to speak to the group. It is important to remember that all of your coaches should have been tested on this material within the USA Football Level 1 Coach Certification, so the focus should be on physical demonstrations, hands-on learning and a specific question-and-answer session.

This clinic is to be held prior to the first day of practice to allow each coach the chance to schedule his own clinic for the parents of his team members. Once the date for the coaches' clinic has been scheduled, the Player Safety Coach needs to register this information on his or her Dashboard to notify USA Football and comply with the program requirements. Player Safety Coaches within large organizations may need to schedule multiple clinics to reach every coach. Each clinic should address all of the Heads Up Football educational pillars.

You can find the Heads Up Football PowerPoint and printable handouts on your Dashboard that you can use to enhance your clinic and provide take home educational materials to your coaches.

Clinic outline

1. Introduction
 - a. Who you are and your role as Player Safety Coach
 - b. Being a Heads Up Football organization
2. Heads Up Football compliance
 - a. Completing the Level 1 Coaching Course
 - b. Hosting your Parent Safety Meeting
 - c. Using Heads Up Football drills, Levels of Contact, practice guidelines
3. The elements of Heads Up Football
 - a. Concussion recognition and response
 - i. Signs and symptoms
 - ii. Removal from and return to play
 - b. Heat preparedness and hydration
 - i. Acclimation weeks
 - ii. Hydration strategy for the players
 - iii. Types of heat illness
 - iv. Emergency Action Plan
 - whole body cold water immersion
 - c. Sudden Cardiac Arrest
 - i. Athlete screening
 - ii. Location and accessibility of AED
 - iii. Emergency Action Plan
 - d. Proper equipment fitting
 - i. How your organization will handle this task
 - ii. Handling issues when equipment breaks
 - iii. Review fitting for helmets and shoulder pads
 - iv. Documenting size
 - e. Heads Up Tackling
 - i. The five fundamentals
 - ii. Applying the fundamentals to other tackle drills
 - f. Heads Up Blocking
 - i. The five fundamentals
 - ii. Applying the fundamentals to other blocking drills
 - g. Practice guidelines and Levels of Contact
 - i. Your organization's rules governing these topics
 - h. In-season guidance
 - i. PSC attendance and documentation of practice
4. The Parent Safety Meeting
 - a. Goal of the clinic
 - b. Registering location and date on the PSC Dashboard
 - c. USA Football meeting outline provided
 - d. USA Football Parents Safety Course
5. Referee/league official/league medical staff
 - a. Football or organizational rule changes and enforcement for player safety



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PARENT SAFETY MEETING

Implementing the Parent Safety Meeting

An important step of the Heads Up Football program is to engage parents and educate them about your organization's adoption of Heads Up Football and the key elements of the program. This is done so parents can gain a better understanding of the key safety information and on-field fundamentals that are being taught to their youngsters. To do this, you will need the help of your coaches.

Ensure that all head coaches schedule a meeting following one of their first practices.

- Coaches can take this time to introduce themselves and their assistant coaches to the parents of the children they are coaching.
- Explain the steps your organization has taken to enhance player safety by adopting the Heads Up Football program.
- Define a parent's role in the Heads Up Football process
- Point them to USA Football's educational resources and Parents Safety Course for more information.

The goal of these meetings is to teach parents the pillars of Heads Up Football: concussion recognition and response, heat preparedness and hydration, sudden cardiac arrest, proper equipment fitting and Heads Up Blocking and Tackling techniques. The important areas to address are why these topics are important, how things will be done in your organization to address each and what parents can do to support your mission.

This meeting should be scheduled by each team following the completion of the Heads Up Coaches Clinic. At that point, the coaching staff should be familiar with the specifics of your organization's medical protocols such as: return to play after a concussion and parents' responsibilities for hydration. Player Safety Coaches must register these meetings in their Dashboard to notify USA Football and comply with program requirements. Make sure you inform your coaches that they must let you know the date and location of their clinics.

There are Heads Up Football PowerPoints and printable handouts on your PSC Dashboard that you can provide to your attendees to enhance their meetings. Only PSCs have access to the Dashboard, so be sure to make arrangements to get them the support information they need. Let parents know that their USA Football membership is free and gives them access to the Parents Safety course and additional materials.

Sample parent meeting agenda

1. Introductions
 - a. Coaching staff and its role
 - b. Team Mom/Dad (if applicable)
 - c. Parent introductions
2. Team Information
 - a. Practice schedule (When, where, times)
 - b. Game schedule
 - c. Uniforms
3. Introduce Heads Up Football
 - a. "Our organization has adopted USA Football's Heads Up Football program to enhance player safety."
 - i. Our coaching staff has completed a coach certification course
 - ii. Our organization has a Player Safety Coach (INSERT NAME / CONTACT INFORMATION) who has been trained by USA Football to implement the program
 - iii. We recognize the importance of player safety
 - b. What a Heads Up Football parent can do
 - i. Educate yourself on health and safety issues with the USA Football parent safety course
 - ii. Support organization's policies and teaching methods
 - iii. Assist child at home with health and safety items you learn
4. The pillars of Heads Up Football include:
 - a. Concussion recognition and response
 - i. Signs and symptoms
 - ii. Organization's removal from and return to play policy
 - b. Heat preparedness and hydration
 - i. Hydration strategy for players
 1. Parents' responsibilities for fluids
 - ii. Organization's Emergency Action Plan – whole body cold water immersion
 - c. Sudden Cardiac Arrest
 - i. Location and accessibility of AED
 - ii. Organization's Emergency Action Plan
 - d. Proper Equipment Fitting
 - i. What a properly fitted helmet and shoulder pad should look like
 - ii. If something breaks, please let me know so we can address it
 - iii. What to know if you buy any of your athlete's equipment
 - e. Heads Up Tackling
 - i. The five fundamentals
 - f. Heads Up Blocking
 - i. The five fundamentals
5. Communication
 - a. Organization's plans for ongoing communication on important health and safety topics
 - b. Encourage parents to visit www.USAFootball.com to learn more



COMMUNICATIONS

As a Player Safety Coach within USA Football's Heads Up Football program, you may have opportunities to speak with media about the Heads Up Football program and your responsibilities.

Media are invited to attend Player Safety Coach Clinics. Interviews also may be scheduled in advance through USA Football's communications department.

Key points to refer to:

USA Football

- USA Football invites every youth league and high school across the country to adopt Heads Up Football into its program.
- USA Football is changing for the better how coaches are prepared, players are taught, parents are informed and safety is addressed.
- USA Football educates more youth and high school football coaches combined than any organization in the United States.
- Alongside leaders in medicine, USA Football works to minimize the chance of injuries in our game through science and education. In no sport will that chance of injury be zero.

Heads Up Football

- Heads Up Football promotes a safer and better way to teach and play our game.
- The medical community tells us that a fundamentally sound player is a safer player.
- Heads Up Football establishes important standards rooted in education to change behavior for the better.
- Last season (2015), more than 65% of all U.S. youth leagues representing nearly 1 million youth players took part in Heads Up Football. Encouragingly, this number continues to rise.

Credit Youth Leagues

- When a league registers for Heads Up Football, it sends an important message to parents that nothing comes before the health and safety of its children.
- Leagues that register for Heads Up Football are committed to teaching, playing and practicing the game the right way.
- A youth league is not required to take part in this program – it does so because its leadership is committed to their players and families.

Concussion

- We are seeing education being converted into action.
- The medical community is uncertain of the full scope of the concussion issue. That is not stopping us from taking proactive steps while experts in medicine complete the research for the benefit of all youth sports.
- Concussion is not a boy issue, girl issue or a football issue – it's a sports issue.
- We know that our kids are safer – in every sport they play – when coaches, parents and our kids learn the proper concussion recognition and response. Heads Up Football covers this.
- Our children sustain more concussions riding bikes than playing any sport. How do we address that? We teach them to ride safer and follow traffic laws. In football, we're coaching better and smarter. Players learn the fundamentals and muscle memory with less contact.
- When in doubt, sit them out. Coaches are not medical experts, and we can't ask them to be.

Note:

When speaking publically, it is correct to say:

- 👉 "Heads Up Football is making football safer."
 - Always use "safer"
 - Virtually no physical activity or sport can be deemed "safe"
 - Use "safer," not "safe"

You will not know the answer to every question.

- 👉 Reporters may present statistics you're not aware of.
- 👉 Reporters may ask questions about a topic that you are not familiar with.

When posed a question that you are not comfortable answering, refer them to Steve Alic at USA Football. A reporter may need to speak with a USA Football medical expert or be requesting information that a member in our office may best answer.

USA Football Communications

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Sr. Director, Communications

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Joe Frollo

Sr. Manager, Communications

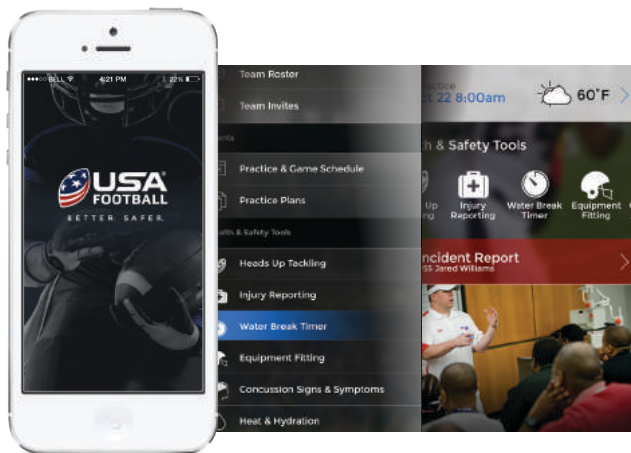
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C: 317-775-5991

jfrollo@usafootball.com



USA FOOTBALL MOBILE APPS



Keep players safer with the USA Football app. Developed with support from the NFL, it's loaded with resources enabling you to make a difference in the sport both on and off the field.

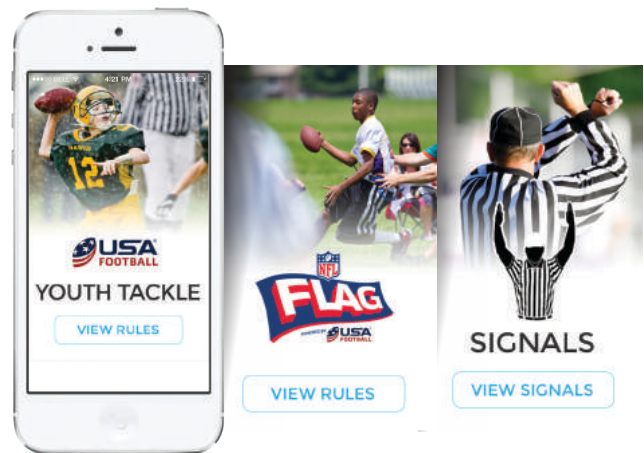
Download the
USA Football app using one of
the following methods:

For iPhone users:

- 👉 Search the App store for “USA Football,” click download.

For Android users:

- 👉 Search Google Play for “USA Football,” click install.



The USA Football Rules Book and Officials Signals app puts the game rules and approved rulings at your fingertips.

Download the
Rules Book & Officials Signals app
using one of the following methods:

For iPhone users:

- 👉 Search the App store for “USA Football Rules Book & Officials Signals,” click download.

For Android users:

- 👉 Search Google Play for “USA Football Rules & Signals,” click install.



3 Tips For Improving Player Safety & Performance In Practice

USA Football believes that player safety starts with proper technique and good coaching. On the next page are a few tips to help you create a practice environment geared toward improving athlete safety and performance.



Tip One: Warm Up Better

Work from the ground up: Starting with the feet and legs, warm up the entire body, ending with the neck and shoulders.

Focus on ankle, hip and shoulder mobility: Working to improve mobility by activating the muscles around the ankles, hips, and shoulders will help protect these joints from injury during practice and games.

End warm-ups with explosive movements, emphasizing safe landing mechanics: End with dynamic, explosive movements (skips, jumps, sprints) and emphasize safe landing mechanics by sticking and briefly holding each landing before performing the next rep.

Tip Two: Practice Smarter (THEN Harder)

Perform high-skill, explosive work early in practice: Young bodies fatigue quickly, so performing difficult, complex tasks at the beginning of a workout ensures athletes are at their freshest.

Focus on quality of movement: Ten good reps are better than 50 poor ones. Don't ask athletes to perform high-volume work without first perfecting their form.

Don't let skill work turn into conditioning: Skill and technique reps (like agility work) should always be conducted with control. Avoid reinforcing a "quantity over quality" mindset by having athletes perform skill reps too quickly.

Tip Three: Focus on the Long Term

Identify bad movement patterns: Pay attention to faulty movement patterns in players to identify potential injury risks.

Reinforce good movement patterns: Identify and strengthen good patterns to help athletes develop a solid foundation of stability — one that will only get stronger once players begin strength training.

Keep progressions slow: Teach your players to care about quality of movement, and they will take that with them season after season.

Young athletes are easily influenced, but this can be a good thing! By structuring your practices to prioritize athlete safety and performance, you can make a positive difference for your players. Make your warm-ups specific to the skills needed to play football safer, organize your practice so that athletes complete the most demanding tasks first, and always keep your players' long-term athletic development in mind — and you will create an environment that allows them to play safer and flourish.



USA Football thanks our partners for their continued support to help us create a better, safer game.

Riddell



MADDEN NFL 16

**SPORTS
AUTHORITY**

ESPN



VOLT

hudl

minute clinic
the medical clinic in CVS/pharmacy

**PHYSIO
CONTROL**



SIEGE
SPORTS



**SHOCK
DOCTOR**
SPORTS PROTECTION

FieldTurf
A Tarkett Sports Company

asg
programs
from
EPIC

AIG



Hi-Chi's

WHOLLY
AMERICA'S #1
GUACAMOLE

CHASE

**HOSPITAL
FOR
SPECIAL
SURGERY**
WHERE THE
WORLD COMES
TO GET BACK
IN THE GAME

BRAX
Fundraising

FlipGive

1 FIRSTDOWN
PLAYBOOK

St. Vincent
Sports Performance

TSS
Photography
1985-2013
70 Years of Capturing Memories

CSD

MAXPREPS

Oyo Sports