Youth Flag Football
1st – 6th Grade
Fall 2017
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Numbers to Know:

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Program Philosophy

It is the goal of Loveland Parks & Recreation to provide quality Youth Athletics programs that promote skill development, equal participation, sportsmanship, fun, and friendly competition in a positive, safe, and recreational setting.
Overview
Thank you for volunteering as a flag football coach. Coaching young people is an exciting way to be involved in the sport. Through your efforts you will learn the important principles of coaching and how to apply them, but more importantly you are developing your athletes’ enthusiasm for the game of football. Remember that coaching youngsters requires more than bringing the footballs and equipment to the field – it involves preparing them physically and mentally to play effectively, fairly and safely while being a positive role model.

We realize that not everyone is an experienced coach and that it may seem overwhelming at times. This coaching manual will offer you some basic information about the game and help you run a productive practice and to manage your team during a game. Please read the manual thoroughly and with a little planning, you should be well equipped to have a productive and exciting season.

Game Rules

Structure:
All games will consist of four (4) ten (10) minute quarters. Teams must change ends of field at half time. There is a one (1) minute break between quarters and a five (5) minute break for half time. The clock will run continuously. **Exception:** clock will now stop during timeouts. A two (2) minute warning will be given before the end of each half. Two (2) time outs per half will be allowed. Time outs are thirty (30) seconds in length. A game cannot end on a timeout.

Field:
The field is 60 yards in length, and a minimum of 40 yards in width with a designated coach’s box.

Equipment:
- No padding or head-gear shall be worn.
- All-purpose soccer (soft cleats) shoes or tennis shoes are permitted.
- Flag belts must be worn by all players.
- Youth Athletic T-shirts must be worn during games. (Home team wears red).
- Pee Wee football used for 1st/2nd grades.
- Junior football used for 3rd/4th and 5th/6th grades.
- Sweat pants or other loose fitting clothing is recommended, however all shirts **MUST** be tucked in.
- Mouth guards are recommended.
Pre-Game:
Players should be at the game field 30 minutes before game time (coaches may ask players to be at the field earlier). Coaches are responsible for making sure each player has game shirts on, flag belts on properly, and no illegal equipment or jewelry on. The coach and at least one designated captain must meet with referees at the center of the field five (5) minutes before game time to go over the rules and flip the coin. The visiting/away team will call the flip. The winner of the flip has the choice of:
1. Kickoff
2. Receive
3. Defend a specific goal
4. Defer: Take pick 2nd half (*) *If winner chooses “4”, the other team gets their choice of 1, 2, or 3 above.

Please take special care in making your decision. If you choose to kick for example, the other team can choose to receive the ball in the second half, thus they can technically get the ball both halves. If you want to receive the ball in the second half you should choose to defer.

Team Structure:
Teams will play a maximum of 8 players and a minimum of 5 players at a time. Everyone will play an equal amount. In order to allow each child an opportunity to play all positions, the child playing quarterback can only play that position for a maximum of two quarters per game. If a team is shorthanded at game time, both teams will play with an equal number of players. Teams are recommended to “share” players, rather than be shorthanded. Each team may have one coach on the playing field to help call plays, and set offensive and defensive line-ups.

When referee calls “Play”, coaches must remain silent until the play is over.
Coaches are only supposed to be on the field to help call the play and set up their players. Once the ball is snapped the coach on the field is not to help his team by shouting instructions to the players.

Basic Rules For Play

Offense: Must have five (5) linemen with center over the ball, two (2) guards and two (2) tackles. (See Diagram). The line-up must be tackle, guard, center, guard, tackle; no unbalanced line allowed with the 5 linemen. Your five offensive linemen must be within one (1) yard of each other. Quarterback must receive the ball from the center. Side snaps are allowed. All players are eligible receivers.
Offense may have 1 player in motion. There is no running the ball straight up the middle, you must run outside the tackles. Once outside IF the line has dispersed the player may cut up the middle.
Defense: A minimum of three (3) defensive players must line up between the offensive tackles. (See Diagram). All defensive players must be at least two (2) yards off the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.

Your other defenders may line up wherever you wish.

Offense Line Formation: Balanced Line

Defense Line Formation: Minimum 3 linemen between the offensive tackles.
Kick Offs/Punts:

A. Kickoff is from the thirty (30) yard line. (For 1st & 2nd grade: No kick offs. Play will begin from the 20-yard line after each score and to begin each half.)
B. No more than five (5) players on the receiving team shall be lined up on the line to receive the kick.
C. Kick offs kicked out of bounds will be put into play at the spot the ball went out of bounds or kicked over with a five (5) yard penalty. (The choice is made by the receiving team.)
D. To prevent pile-ups, the kicking team cannot recover fumbles, kicks and punts, and on-side kicks are not allowed. The receiving team will put the ball into play from the point in which the ball became dead.
E. Punting – If a punt is to be made, the team must announce it to the official and opposing team before the down starts. After the announcement, the kick must be made and neither team may cross the scrimmage line until after the kick. (1st & 2nd grade can “punt” but there will be no actual punt, the other team will get the ball at the opposing twenty (20) yard line).
F. A team may punt on any down. The kicker has five (5) seconds to punt the ball after the center snap. The receiving team must have five (5) players on the line of scrimmage at the time of the punt. If the kicker drops the center snap he may pick it up and still kick the ball. This is the only exception to a dead ball!

Advancing and Downing:

1st/2nd grades: The offensive team will have six (6) downs to score a touchdown.
3rd/4th & 5th/6th grades: The offensive team will have four (4) downs to make 10 yards.

A. A team shall have thirty (30) seconds between downs to put the ball into play after the placement of the ball. If the ball is not snapped within 30 seconds there will be a delay of game penalty.
B. The ball is put into play by a center snap.
C. Pulling the flag belt from the ball carrier’s hip shall down the ball. Tacklers should immediately hold the flag high in the air.
D. Fumble: To avoid pile-ups and injuries, anytime the ball is fumbled or muffed, it becomes dead as soon as it touches the ground. This includes the pass from the center.
E. A ball that becomes dead behind a goal line will be either a touchback or safety.
F. On kick-offs and punts, the ball is live even though it touches the ground. It is considered dead when touched by the kicking team, fumbled by the receiving team or blown dead by the officials.
G. For safety reasons, no running plays between the tackles is allowed. Running plays must be done outside the tackles.
H. A player may not jump or dive forward to advance the football.
Extra Play:
After scoring a touchdown, the scoring team will have the opportunity for an extra play. This line of scrimmage for the extra play will be at the 2 ½-yard line for 1st and 2nd grade teams. The line of scrimmage for 3rd thru 6th grade teams will be at the 5-yard line. The result of the play is either good (crossing the goal line) or no good. There are no 2 point conversions in this league. Kickoff will occur at the completion of the extra play, except for 1st and 2nd grade teams where the opposing team will get the ball at the 20-yard line.

Deflagging:
A. There shall be no tackling of the ball carrier, passer, or kicker.
B. A defensive player must keep their feet on the ground at all times when attempting to pull the offensive player's flag.
C. The player carrying or having possession of the ball is down when the flag is removed from his/her waist (deflagging). After a deflagging, the defensive player will hold the flag above his/her head and stand still.
D. The defensive players cannot hold or push the ball carrier down to remove the flag. An accidental touch of the body or shoulder while reaching for the flag will not be considered a violation; however, touching of the head or face will be considered a violation.
E. Defensive players may not run over, push, or pull a blocker away from them. Defensive players may push offensive players sideways if they get past the offensive players, but the blocker may not be pushed down.
F. If the ball carrier’s flag belt has inadvertently fallen off at any time during the play, they may be downed by the use of a one-hand touch anywhere.

Blocking:
A. A blocker must be on his/her feet at all times while blocking. All interior linemen may be in the 2 or 3 point stance. Interior linemen, though crouching as if to block must first stand straight up after the snap.
B. A defensive player cannot block or push a ball carrier out-of-bounds; they must go for the flag.
C. Butting, elbowing, and knee blocking are not permitted.
D. Cross-body and roll blocking are not permitted.
E. A shadow block or the offensive screen block shall take place with minimal contact. Blocking shall be with the body with the arms down, behind the back or folded against the chest, however elbows and arms may not break the plane of the blocker’s body. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive player’s screen block is illegal. A player must be on their feet before, during and after screen blocking.
Penalties and Fouls:

15 yard penalties:
1. Unnecessary roughness (bull rushing)
2. Flying blocks
3. Profane language
4. Unsportsmanlike conduct – no player, coach, parent or spectator shall act in any unsportsmanlike manner. Second violation on any one person or repeated violations by a team shall result in dismissal of those involved from the area, and at the discretion of the Director, from the league.
5. Illegal tying of belt – this is 15 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down.

10 yard penalties:
1. Holding
2. Clipping
3. Pass interference
4. Fair catch interference
5. Unintentional fouls (accidental tripping)
6. Illegal blocking

5 yard penalties:
1. Offsides
2. Intentional grounding
3. Delay of game
4. Punt/kick violation
5. Illegal procedure
6. Illegal forward pass
7. Too many players on the field

Guarding the flag:
The first infraction the player receives a warning and thereafter the ball is dead at the point of infraction.
Practice Information

Practice Do’s and Don’ts

DO…

➤ Show up to practice early.
➤ Have a lesson plan prepared.
➤ Introduce yourself to your players’ parents and make them aware of your practice rules, facility rules, and make sure they arrange for their children to be picked up on time.
➤ Know where the nearest phone is for emergency use only.
➤ Make your practices fun and challenging while maintaining a level of control.
➤ Remember to keep track of equipment at all times.

DON’T…

➤ Allow players to run around uncontrolled.
➤ Leave practice until all the players have been picked up.
➤ Let anyone practice who is not officially on your roster.
➤ Use laps or exercise as a punishment for misconduct. Time-outs are more appropriate.
**Youth Athletic Coaches**

The City of Loveland Human Resources department will conduct background investigations on coaches each season they agree to coach. Please refer to the Disclosure Form & Statement of Criminal History you completed as part of your application or you may contact the Volunteer Program Coordinator at 970-962-2675 if you have any questions or concerns.

These investigations are needed in order to protect our youth however we also ask that you, as a coach adhere to the following suggestions in order to protect yourself from accusations or inappropriate conduct:

1. Avoid being alone with players in non-public settings.
   - “Never Alone” – The coach (or supervising adult) should never be alone with a player – there should always be 1 or more additional players (or adults) with the coach.
   - “Plain Sight Rule” – If a situation arises where the coach is left alone with a player (parents are late to pick up player after practice or game), the coach (supervising adult) and player are to wait in plain public sight in a designated waiting area. This includes the parking lots of the facilities we utilize and well lit curb/sidewalk areas adjacent to parking areas.

2. Document unusual situations and forward the documentation to the Program Coordinator at 970-962-2437 and/or the Volunteer Program Coordinator at 970-962-2675.

3. Do not buy gifts or give money to team members.

4. Do not take kids home in your personal vehicle unless accompanied by another child or adult

5. Let your language set the tone. Avoid profanity, even in conversations that you think are private – these conversations may actually be in earshot of players.

6. Never verbally demean, negatively label or ridicule a child based on appearance, gender, weight, sexual orientation, race or any other identifying characteristic.
Practice Session Worksheet

Date  __________

Warm-up

Skill Training  (specific skill, teaching plan, drills to be used)

Scrimmage Time  (specific game and goals/focus)

Evaluation
Exercises for Warm-Up Time

Healthy young players are always ready to play the game and rarely look forward to any preliminary "EXERCISES". It is important to avoid making the warm-up drudgery. The warm-up drills you use, and your attitude about them will strongly influence your player's lifetime attitudes about exercise.

Circulatory Exercises
1. Run at Half Speed - The coach should set the pace by leading the team in laps around the field or other landmark. This is not a race.
2. Jumping Jacks - Ask players to do 30 jumping jacks at half speed and then 30 at full speed.
3. Follow the Leader - The coach should lead the team in a variety of movements associated with football running forward and backwards, and sideways shuffle.
4. Relays - There are a variety of simple running relays that can be used with or without a ball. Have players run forward, backward, side shuffle, or around obstacles.

Stretching Exercises
1. Slow Arm Circles - forward, backward.
2. Side Benders.
3. Trunk Twisters.
4. Toe touching with feet together.
5. Toe touching with feet crossed.
6. Thigh stretches.
   a. Lying on back on ground, pull knee close to chest by grasping shin.
   b. Lying on stomach, bend knee and bring heel up toward backside. Grasp ankle and pull toward back side, keeping knees together.
7. Calf Stretch.

Drills for Development of Flag Football Fundamentals.

Here are a few drills to get you started. They are designed to emphasize the skills and basics. Use your imagination to alter them to meet your needs. Also, utilize other resources as needed.

Coaching Hints
1. Players will play and act in the game in direct relationship to the way they have been practicing.
2. Repetition is the key to learning "IF" the skill being repeated is executed properly.
3. The closer the game conditions you provide in practice the better athletes will play the game.
4. Flexibility in planning practice is important. You should provide drills to meet the particular needs of each individual and the team.
5. Try to utilize as many balls as possible. The more time touching a ball, the more skill development.
Warm-Up Drills

“Jingle-Jangle”
This drill gets players loose and warmed up, while also helping them practice their agility and footwork. Place cones at the corners of a 15-yard square. Line up players at one corner of square. Players then:

1. sprint to first cone
2. side-step to second cone
3. backpedal to third cone
4. sprint back to beginning of the line
5. Throw a football to each player as he/she finishes the drill.
6. Repeat drill to other side after everyone has had a turn

Passing / Receiving Drills

“Passing”
Set out a 20 x 20 yard area. Place players opposite each other in parallel lines about 3 yards apart. The entire team can participate if there are enough footballs. With a limited number of footballs, place students behind each other and have them wait for a turn or pass the footballs available in a zig-zag pattern.

Drill Outline: Participants pass the football back and forth to their partner.

Progression:

- Begin with the participants on both knees facing each other.
- Kids throwing from their knees will focus on the throwing motion without the use of their legs.
- Progress to right knee up and then switch to left knee up.
- Next, have players stand straight up and pass with feet apart.

Key Coaching Points:

- Passing motion is the same as throwing a baseball, javelin, or handball.
- The hand without the football points to the target or the receiver.
- Make sure kids follow through on their throws
- Point-step-throw
- The receiver forms a target with both hands, palms facing out with thumbs and pointing fingers touching
- The receiver’s fingers should form a triangle.
“Run & Shoot”
This drill helps players understand simple passing routes from the perspective of both quarterback and receiver. Divide your team into three groups. The first player in line is the first passer; the second goes out to play defensive back; the third is the receiver. The outside groups run simple 10-yard square-out patterns, while the middle group runs 10-yard turn-ins or buttonhooks. Rotate each line this way; after passing, the quarterback becomes the next receiver; the next player in line becomes the passer; the first receiver becomes the defensive back; and the first defensive back moves on to the next group. Make sure players get chances at all three positions.

“Circle Toss”
Run in a circle playing catch and reverse the action. Release the ball quickly. Square the shoulders and hips to the target. As a variation, one man can stand still and the others run around him. Change directions and switch positions.

Ball Handling Drills

“Grip Drop Drill” (one minute)
1. Hold the ball at waist level with one hand
2. Bring the ball up 6 to 8 inches
3. Let go of the ball completely, and then regrip it.
4. Don’t slap at the ball, but squeeze it.
5. Alternate right and left hand

“Grip Lock Drill” (one minute)
1. Hold the ball at chest level with two hands
2. Let go with the left hand and swing the ball to the right
3. Turn palm out with thumb facing down
4. Lock elbow at full extension
5. Bring the ball back to starting position
6. Exchange the ball from the left hand as fast as possible
7. Do the same with the left arm

“Globetrottering” (one minute)
Hold the ball in front of body with two hands
1. Pass the ball behind the back
2. Pass the ball between the legs
3. Change directions
4. This develops a sense of touch
**Defense Drills**

**“Defense”**

Set out a 10x20 yard area. Place the cones five yards apart. One football is needed. The entire team can participate in this drill. The object is for the running back to run along the line of scrimmage and select an area between the cones to run through. The running back starts with the football. On the coach’s signal the running back begins running. The defensive back must mirror the running back and attempt to capture the running back’s flag before the running back selects a hole between the cones. This drill simulates making a one-on-one flag capture.

**Key Coaching Points**

- Running back must keep head up and the football firmly tucked away
- Defensive back must keep shoulders square and head and eyes looking upfield
- Defensive back watches the running back’s hips

**“Defense”**

Set out a 20x20 yard area. Ten players start at one end zone, each with a football (if available). Two defensive backs are stationed in the middle of the field. The object is for the running backs to get past the defensive backs to the opposite end zone without getting their flags pulled. If a running back has his/her flag pulled, he/she sits out. Stop the drill after the running backs reach the opposite end zone. Identify kids with pulled flags and allow players to catch their breath. The drill continues then by changing direction until there is one running back remaining.

**Key Coaching Points**

- Defensive backs should run to where the running back is going, not to where they are.
- Watch the running back’s waist, not his/her head or shoulders.

**“Defense”**

Set out a 20x20 yard area. Pair up participants, one group is wide receivers, the other group is defensive backs. Each defensive back will backpedal and “mirror” the wide receiver. All players will start in slow motion on the coach’s command. Switch, making the wide receivers play as defensive backs. Progress to half speed. Switch positions again. Now go to full speed. On the coach’s command, the wide receivers will try to run past the defensive backs, who are backpedaling. During the drill, the coach calls out “GO”, the defensive back is now allowed to pull the flag of the wide receiver who is still running for the end zone. The “GO” simulates the wide receiver catching the football.

**Key Coaching Points**

- The defensive back stays in front of the offensive player
- The defensive back watches the wide receiver’s waist and hips
Scrimmage Time

Your scrimmages should be designed to further develop the skills you worked on during the skill-training portion of your practice session. A scrimmage is a controlled, competitive activity involving more than one player utilizing more than one skill. It should be fun!

Small-sided Games
Small-sided scrimmage formats, 1 on 1 or 2 on 2, give everyone the chance to handle the ball and take an active part in play. This is especially valuable for the less skilled players who might otherwise tend to be ignored by the better players. Increased contact with the ball will produce a faster rate of improvement.

Evaluation

Record information that will help you plan your next practice session. Are your players ready to move on to a more advanced technique than just the basics? Did some mistake repeatedly occur during scrimmage time that should be addressed? Do you need to devise a new way to teach a skill that players did not easily pick up on?

Coaching During A Game

During a game you are responsible for many things. These include managing the substitution changes, making sure all players get equal playing time, and critiquing things like the blocking or the pass coverage. You must also communicate with the players on the field – let them know if there is a run or pass, or where the ball is if they appear to have lost track of it.

You will have to continually remind the players to play in their positions on the field. This is a fast game so players, especially kids, tend to get out of position quickly.

For additional coaching tips, drills, plays, etc. visit the following websites:

http://youthflagfootballhq.com/coaches/
http://molinc.il.us/DocumentCenter/View/1558
http://www.flagfootballplans.com/blogs/coachs-corner
Additional Games to Teach Basics

**Sharks vs. Minnows - Flag Pulling Drill**
For this game, designate an area on the field for play. All players must stay within this designated area. Start with one or two players designated as the “Shark(s)”. The rest of the players are the “Minnows”. The object of the “Shark” is to grab the flag of the “Minnows”. Once a “Minnow” has their flag grabbed, they then become “Sharks”, and attempt to grab the flag from the other “Minnows”. The game ends when there is only 1 “Minnow” remaining.

**Flag Football “Ultimate” – Passing Drill**
Like Ultimate Frisbee, but with a football. The concept is for the team with the football to pass the ball to teammates without dropping the ball, all the while moving the ball toward the end zone.
- Set up a large field with an end zone at each end.
- The player with the football has 10 seconds to pass the ball to a teammate.
- The ball can be passed forward, sideways, or backwards.
- The player with the ball can only take 2 steps after catching the ball.
- The offensive players without the ball can move anywhere on the field.
- If the ball is caught in the end zone, 7 points are awarded to the receiving team.
- After a touchdown, the team that was on defense switches to offense and takes possession of the ball on their own 5 yard line.
- If the ball is dropped or intercepted, play continues with the other team in possession of the ball from the point of the turnover.
- Each defensive player must stay at arms length from the player with the ball. When guarding the player in possession of the ball, the defensive play is similar to that of basketball.
This is a great drill for working on WRs getting open, throwing (leading the receiver) and catching and teamwork.

**The Gauntlet – Flag Pulling Drill**
For this drill, you create a small running zone for the offense. At the other end, you have one defender. The rest of the team is on offense and line up at the other end of the cones. On the whistle the first offensive player tried to beat the defense. Once the flag is pulled or the defense is beat you send the next runner. The defender in this drill has pull as many flags as he can. It helps with one on one tackling.

**Mr. Freeze and the Killer Bee’s – Learning How to Swarm on Defense**
For this drill you have an offense and a defense. The offense runs a play, the Coach will yell freeze during the play. The players all freeze where they are at. The main object is to get your defense to learn how to swarm the ball carrier like killer bees. By having everyone freeze in place the coaches can help the kids learn how to adjust to the ball carrier by pointing out where they should be. This also helps the offense in that you can see where your players are and help them adjust as well to counter the defensive setup.
Blank Play Sheet

Offense Plays

Feel Free To Make Copies For Your Team