

## **FOOTBALL CAUTIONARY STATEMENT**

Football is a contact sport and injuries will occur. The coaches working in our program are well qualified, professional people. Fundamentals related to playing football will continually and repeatedly be emphasized on and off the field. The information contained within this list of rules and procedures is to inform the young men in our football program of the proper techniques to practice for maximum safety in the contact phase of the game.

### **Pre-season Preparation:**

Because football is a contact sport, athletes must condition to prepare themselves for the season. This includes both strength training as well as aerobic training. It is also important that athletes continue to strength train during their season to help prevent injuries.

### **Tackling, Blocking, and Running the Ball:**

By rule, the helmet is not to be used as a "ram." Initial contact is not to be made with the helmet. It is NOT possible to play the game safely or correctly without making contact with the helmet when properly blocking and tackling an opponent. Therefore, technique is most important to prevention of injuries.

Tackling and blocking techniques are basically the same. Contact is to be made above the waist, but not initially with the helmet. The player should always be in a position of balance, knees bent, back straight, body slightly bent forward, head up, assume a striking position or near to the opponent as possible with the main contact being made with the shoulder.

Blocking and tackling by not putting the helmet as close to the body as possible could result in shoulder injury such as a separation or a pinched nerve in the neck area. The dangers of not following the proper techniques can be from minor to disabling to even death. The reason for following the safety rules in making contact with the upper body and helmet is that improper body alignment can put the spinal column in a vulnerable position for injury.

If the head is bent downward, the cervical (neck) vertebrae are vulnerable and contact on the TOP OF THE HELMET could result in a dislocation, nerve damage, paralysis or death. If the back is not straight, the thoracic (mid-back) and lumbar vertebrae are also vulnerable to serious injury if contact is again made to the TOP OF THE HELMET.

### **Basic Hitting (Contact) Position and Fundamental Technique:**

If the knees are not bent, the chance of knee injury is greatly increased. Fundamentally a player should be in the proper hitting position at all times during live ball play and this point will be repeated continually during practice. The danger is anything from strained muscles, to ankle injuries, to serious knee injuries requiring surgery. The rules have made blocking below the waist (outside a two-yard by four-yard area next to the football) illegal. A runner with the ball, however, may be tackled around the legs.

In tackling, the rules prohibit initial contact with the helmet or grabbing the face mask or edge of the helmet. These restrictions were implemented because of serious injuries resulting from grasping the face mask. Initial helmet contact could result in a bruise, dislocation, broken bone, head injury, internal injury such as kidneys, spleen, bladder, etc. Grabbing the face mask or helmet edge could result in a neck injury

that could range from a muscle strain to a dislocation, nerve injury, or spinal column damage causing paralysis or death.

Illegal and dangerous play by participating athletes will not be tolerated and all players are repeatedly reminded of the dangers of these acts.

### **Fitting and Use of Equipment:**

Shoulder pads, helmets, hip pads, pants including thigh pads and knee pads should be properly fitted and worn. Wear all protective pads, braces and supportive undergarments to all practices and competitions. Shoulder pads that are too small will leave the shoulder joint vulnerable to bruises or separations and could also be too tight in the neck area resulting in a possible pinched nerve. Shoulder pads which are too large will leave the neck area poorly protected and will slide on the shoulders making them vulnerable to bruises or separations.

Helmets must fit snugly at the contact points: Front, back, and top of head. The chin straps must be fastened, and the cheek pads must be of the proper thickness. On contact, a helmet that is too tight could result in a headache. Too loose a fit could result in headaches, a concussion, a face injury such as a broken nose or cheek bone, and a blow to the back of the neck could cause a neck injury, possibly quite serious such as paralysis or even death.

### **Preparation for practice or contest:**

1. Wear all protective and supportive equipment including mouth guards to every practice or contest unless otherwise indicated by the daily practice plan.
2. Be sure that all stabilizing straps and laces are properly worn and tightened, and all fasteners secured so equipment is properly positioned.
3. Wear outer and under garments that are appropriate for humidity and temperature.
4. Players should ingest the equivalent of 4-6 glasses of water each day.
5. Players with visual impairment(s) must wear corrective, shatterproof glasses or contact lenses if the impairment affects judgment or perception.
6. Players needing protective tape, padding, or bracing should arrive early to receive necessary treatment.
7. Remove all jewelry and metal hair fasteners.
8. Players with seizure, neuromuscular, renal, cardiac, insulin/diabetic, or chronic skeletal problems, disorders or diseases, must present physician's approval to the coach prior to participation in any practice session.

### **In the locker room:**

1. Be alert to slippery floors.
2. Be alert to changes in floor texture and to elevated thresholds between shower and locker rooms.
3. Keep floors free of litter. Place all personal belongings in assigned lockers.
4. Close and lock locker doors when away from your assigned locker.
5. Keep soap and shampoo in the shower room.
6. No horseplay, rough-housing, hazing or initiations.
7. Do not wear football shoes in the building or locker room at any time.

## **Movement to the practice/contest site or travel to contest/practice site: “Be alert to”**

1. Goal posts
2. Blocking sleds
3. Kicking/Kick return drills
4. Passer/Receiver drills
5. Agility, sprinting, or other fast action drills
6. No horseplay, rough-housing, hazing or initiations

## **Cautions specific to football:**

1. The Head and Helmet:
  - a. Tackle or block or break tackles with the shoulder pad. NEVER USE THE HELMET TO STRIKE THE OPPONENT.
  - b. Keep the chin and eyes up when blocking, tackling, or running with the ball. Lowering the head/helmet jeopardizes the neck and spinal cord.
2. Blocking and Defensive Contact:
  - a. The forearm striking surface should be accelerated as a unit with the shoulder and extension of the trunk. DO NOT "wind up" to accelerate the forearm separately.
  - b. Block from the front or the side and above the waist.
  - c. When pursuing an opposing ball carrier, do not "pile on" when the opponent is down.
  - d. Never grab an opponent's facemask.
3. General:
  - a. GET UP! When on the ground you are vulnerable to being stepped on or receiving a leg, shoulder or knee injury.
  - b. When falling - TUCK - Leave no extremity extended either to absorb the fall, or while on the ground.
  - c. Participate fully in all neck strengthening exercises.
4. Water – Frequent drink breaks will be scheduled during practices, and players should hydrate themselves frequently before and during practice and games.
5. Weight Room – Maintenance strength training procedures will be utilized. Observe all weight room policies for progressions, spotting, and general safety.

## **Emergencies**

Because of the nature of football, some injuries will occur. All injuries must be called to a coach's or trainer's attention. Most will be minor and can be managed with basic first aid. However, some may need more intense management and may also require squad members to:

1. Stop all practices, scrimmages, or drills. DO NOT move the victim!
2. Call the coach to manage the situation if not already at the site.
3. Sit or kneel in close proximity.
4. Assist by:
  1. Helping with the injured person
  2. Calling for additional assistance
  3. Bringing first aid equipment or supplies to the site
  4. Keeping onlookers away
  5. Directing the rescue squad to the accident site