

AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL, INC.

OFFICIAL FOOTBALL RULES & REGULATIONS

2026 Edition

June 2, 2026



Reproducing this document in whole or in part, without written permission from American Youth Football, Inc. is strictly prohibited.

© Copyright 2026. American Youth Football, Inc.

All questions should be directed to:
football@americanyouthfootball.com

Thank you to the following individuals for not only their contributions to the great sport of football but for their tireless efforts, support and encouragement.

Wellington Mara - Bill Walsh - John McVay - Bill Polian

PREAMBLE

American Youth Football (AYF) is a support service organization that provides guidelines, suggestions and best practices for its local Member organizations to consider and implement as appropriate. Members entities, typically corporations, but may include LLCs, DBAs or sole proprietorships, *et al.*) purchase membership in AYF and agree to the Terms and Conditions of Membership, which are presented during the registration process. AYF does not have operational control over its Members or local matters concerning its Members. AYF exerts limited operational control over regional tournaments and significant operational control over its national championships. Due to the expansive reach and local nature of youth sports, AYF is not able to ensure compliance with the guidelines, suggestions, rules and best practices it recommends to its local members. Parents, players, our Members and their respective administrators, staff, participants, and stakeholders should conduct their own inquiries to ensure that local teams/associations/conferences are operating in accordance with local/state/federal laws, governing body standards, and appropriate standards of care including, but not limited to, the guidelines and best practices recommended by AYF, in addition to specific personal concerns you may have related to your child and or ward's participation in our Member organizations' youth football and cheer, step and dance programs.

RULES - DISTINCTIONS

This Model Rule Book ("Rule Book") is provided to AYF Members as a resource that may be used in connection with the operation of their organization. Within this Rule Book are model rules, competition eligibility requirements, recommendations guidelines and best practices. This Rule Book is not all-inclusive and should be used in conjunction with other external resources, meaning resources which are beyond what is provided to you by American Youth Football. AYF Members should comply with all applicable state and federal laws including, but not limited to, state concussion laws and Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017. AYF recommends that its Members individually and collectively actively seek resources from governmental entities such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, relating to health and safety including, but not limited to, dehydration, concussions and other medical related items, as well as non-governmental entities including, but not limited to, medical boards, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics. Members should adopt, implement, and document risk management plans such as provided through our vendor Sadler Sports & Recreation Insurance (see www.sadlersports.com/ayf for more details) or comparable plans from other sources addressing the following issues: appointing risk management officer and committee; supervision of youth; instruction through trained coaches including proper tackling techniques; facilities inspection, maintenance, and repair; equipment including selection, fitting, service, reconditioning, and replacement; sports injury prevention and care including emergency response and return to play; weather related modification, postponement, and cancellation due to heat and lightning; mitigating auto risks, criminal background checks and child abuse and other misconduct policies and education that are Safe Sport Act compliant; concussion policies and education including identification, removal from play, medical treatment, gradual return to play protocols, and practice contact restrictions.

Recommendations, suggestions and best practices in addition to reasonable standards of care and industry norms are important as they protect your participants, our community and the game of football and as such it is reasonable to expect that local member organizations should seek to ensure reasonable compliance with the aforementioned.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

This Rule Book includes a comprehensive list of "Eligibility Requirements"; Eligibility Requirements are a list of requirements established by AYF to ensure fairness and a level competitive playing field among those teams that intend to participate in AYF intramural competitions, specifically AYF Regional tournaments and the American Youth Football National Championships. AYF, in its sole discretion, shall declare ineligible any team, coach, player and or league from participating in any AYF Regional or National tournaments, based on a reasonable suspicion,

finding and or a determination, by AYF, that a team, coach, participant and or league has violated and or conspired to violate one or more of the Eligibility Requirements.

For clarity, during the preseason and during the playing season and certain parts of the postseason, AYF does not affirmatively enforce any rules or Eligibility Requirements, instead if an Eligibility Requirement is violated at any time during the preseason, playing season or postseason, upon discovery of the violation, the violating party shall, unless otherwise determined by AYF, be declared ineligible to compete in the Regional and National Championship Tournaments and or disqualified from said tournament, in accordance with AYF tournament rules.

BULLETINS

From time to time during the playing and or off-season, AYF may introduce and or remove, revise and or redact rules, guidelines, recommendations and or positions on best practices. These changes will be made in the form of bulletins, which may be distributed and or posted on AYF website(s). Bulletins will be reviewed and may be discussed, after publication at the next annual AYF leadership meeting for consideration and discussion before being added to the Rule book.

TITLE	PAGE
<u>PREAMBLE</u>	2
<u>RULES - DISTINCTIONS</u>	2
<u>ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS</u>	2
<u>BULLETINS</u>	3
<u>AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL, INC. MISSION STATEMENT</u>	9
<u>OBJECTIVES</u>	9
<u>GIVING BACK</u>	9
<u>GOALS</u>	10
<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	10
<u>BOARD OF DIRECTORS</u>	10
<u>FOOTBALL ADVISORY BOARD</u>	10
<u>ONLINE RESOURCES: WEBSITES</u>	10
<u>SECTION 1 - MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE</u>	11
<u>SECTION 2 - STRUCTURE DEFINITIONS</u>	12
<u>REGION</u>	12
<u>CONFERENCE</u>	12
<u>ASSOCIATION</u>	12
<u>BOUNDARIES</u>	12
<u>PARTICIPANT</u>	13
<u>DIVISION</u>	13
<u>TEAM</u>	13
<u>SECTION 3 - RULES ENFORCEMENT/AUTHORITY</u>	13
<u>NATIONAL LEVEL OF AUTHORITY - LIMITATIONS</u>	13
<u>REGIONAL LEVEL OF AUTHORITY - LIMITATIONS</u>	13
<u>CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION LEVEL OF AUTHORITY</u>	14
<u>SECTION 4 - GOVERNING RULEBOOK</u>	14
<u>SECTION 5 - DIVISIONS</u>	16

<u>ALL AMERICAN DIVISION AGE CUT-OFFS</u>	17
<u>SPRING FOOTBALL/SUMMER PASSING LEAGUES</u>	17
<u>DIVISION 1, DIVISION 2 AND DIVISION 3</u>	17
<u>CONFERENCES DECLARING DIVISION 2 AND DIVISION 3 STATUS</u>	17
<u>ACCEPTABLE METHODS FOR DIVISION 2 STATUS</u>	17
<u>POSTSEASON DESIGNATION</u>	17
<u>ACCEPTABLE METHODS FOR DIVISION 3 STATUS</u>	17
<u>FLAG DIVISION</u>	18
<u>SECTION 6 - INSURANCE REQUIREMENT</u>	18
<u>SECTION 7 - FORMATION OF TEAMS</u>	20
<u>DROPPING A PLAYER</u>	20
<u>DUAL PARTICIPATION</u>	20
<u>PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT</u>	21
<u>A AND B TEAMS/SQUADS</u>	21
<u>ALL STAR TEAMS</u>	21
<u>SECTION 8 - PRACTICE/CONDITIONING/TRAINING CAMPS</u>	22
<u>START DATES</u>	22
<u>CONDITIONING/TRAINING CAMP</u>	22
<u>COACHING STAFF REQUIREMENTS</u>	22
<u>PRACTICE/GAME RESTRICTIONS</u>	23
<u>SECTION 9 - PLAYING SEASON GAMES</u>	23
<u>GAME CLOCK DETAILS/PLAYING REQUIREMENTS/NUMBER OF PLAYERS</u>	23
<u>COACHING COMMUNICATIONS</u>	24
<u>MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS</u>	24
<u>SANCTIONED FOOTBALL</u>	25
<u>SCORING, TIE BREAKERS, LOPSIDED RULE</u>	25
<u>REGIONAL/NATIONAL TOURNAMENT</u>	26
<u>SECTION 10 - PROTESTS</u>	26

<u>AYF NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS PROTESTS</u>	26
<u>SECTION 11 - PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION/ELIGIBILITY</u>	27
<u>SECTION 12 - ROSTERS</u>	28
<u>SECTION 13 - MANDATORY PLAY RULES</u>	29
<u>SECTION 14 - COACHING REQUIREMENTS/BACKGROUND CHECKS/SCOUTING</u>	30
<u>AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL COACHES CERTIFICATIONS</u>	31
<u>SECTION 15 - COACHES AND ADMINISTRATORS PLEDGE</u>	32
<u>SECTION 16 - COACHES AND ADMINISTRATORS CODE</u>	34
<u>SECTION 17 - ADMINISTRATORS, COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS STANDARD OF CONDUCT</u>	34
<u>SECTION 18 - ANTI-SUBSTANCE ABUSE RULE</u>	35
<u>SECTION 19 - MINIMUM PENALTIES</u>	36
<u>SECTION 20 - HEARINGS AND APPEALS</u>	37
<u>SECTION 21 - REGIONAL/NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP ELIGIBILITY RULES AND PENALTIES</u>	37
<u>POLICY REGARDING COMMITMENT/DROPS</u>	38
<u>SPECIAL RULES REGARDING NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES</u>	38
<u>SECTION 22 - SUMMARY OF DUE DATES</u>	39
<u>SECTION 23 - CONFERENCE ALL STARS</u>	41
<u>CONFERENCE ALL STAR – 13/14U (UNLIMITED WEIGHT):</u>	41
<u>CONFERENCE ALL STAR – 11U/12U (UNLIMITED WEIGHT):</u>	41
<u>CONFERENCE ALL STAR – 9/10U (UNLIMITED WEIGHT):</u>	41
<u>COACHING SELECTION</u>	42
<u>PLAYER SELECTION</u>	42
<u>CONFERENCE REQUIREMENTS</u>	43
<u>SECTION 24 - ELIGIBILITY</u>	45
<u>SECTION 25 - STATES AND REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP 6U/7U RULES</u>	45
<u>INFORMATIONAL SECTION ONLY – NOT A MODEL RULE</u>	45
<u>COACHING & ADMINISTRATOR NOMINATIONS</u>	46

\$1000

EVERY SEASON STARTS AT

DICK'S
SPORTING GOODS.



GAMECHANGER™



CHANCE FOR \$1000 GIFT CARD

This season, AYF and GameChanger are excited to bring the game to your fans anywhere! GameChanger will be supplying a \$1,000 Dick's Sporting Goods gift card for one lucky football and cheer team.

Learn More:

1

Live stream a minimum of 6 games on GameChanger

2

Have at least 40 fans follow your team on GameChanger

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. Open to eligible coaching staff or team managers of athletic teams associated with the AYF organization of the 49 states (excluding Rhode Island) 18 years of age or older. Contest begins on August 1, 2025 at 12:01am ET and ends at 11:59 pm ET on January 31, 2026. See Official Football and Cheer Rules. Void where prohibited.

AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL, INC. MISSION STATEMENT

American Youth Football, Inc., established in 1996, is a support services organization, dedicated to Giving Back to communities by encouraging the positive development of youth athletes through their association with adult leaders in the sport of American football and cheer. Guidelines are established to ensure that players play in an atmosphere of learning with a competitive balance between teams.

For the greater good, a “Kids First” Philosophy is expected of all AYF member organizations.

OBJECTIVES

AYF encourages its Member organizations to welcome all youth athletes to become involved in football and cheerleading, regardless of race, religion and gender. AYF has established divisions, which members are encouraged to follow, which are designed to serve various ages, as well as participants with special needs.

AYF is a non-intrusive organization, whose Members govern their own operations, however membership in AYF is predicated on a requirement that Members subscribe to the following principles:

1. A focus on teaching
2. Instilling sportsmanship
3. Encouraging participation
4. Adherence to generally accepted best practices and industry standards

AYF Members who have committed to participating in the National Tournament, in order to ensure competitive fairness throughout the tournament, must adhere to the Eligibility Requirements in this Rule Book, and any and all AYF tournament rules.

Through open and measured communication with its Members, AYF will tailor its rules to ensure uniform and fair application to ensure and maintain the spirit of fair competition.

AYF Members may contact AYF with questions regarding this Rule Book and the contents herein.

Actions in contravention of the rules designed to ensure fair competition may result in probation, suspension, or exclusion from AYF and or the ability to participate in sanctioned events.

GIVING BACK

American Youth Football is on a mission to give back to the community. American Youth Football’s “Giving Back” programs range from: financial grants to leagues who need assistance; shoes/uniform donations, equipment; field development; recognition for administrators who are making a difference in the AYF Hall of Fame.

GOALS

- Dedicated to teaching youth through positive role models.
- Emphasis on learning, playing, and enjoying the sport while instilling high moral standards by stressing the importance of academic achievement and community involvement.
- Helping kids become leaders and teammates.
- Fostering confidence and a sense of self-worth, in players that extend beyond the gridiron and into the school, family and community.
- To prepare youngsters to face the future with sportsmanship, teamwork, honesty, responsibility, self-discipline, positive aspirations, academic preparedness and confidence. If we teach them positive lessons, such as playing by the rules, our young athletes will learn to live by the rules.
- To lend members support yet remaining NON-INTRUSIVE to local operations.
- To make youth football and cheer ALL-INCLUSIVE, by not excluding participants based on factors such as, weight or athletic ability.
- To encourage programs for special needs, at-risk and anti-gang groups, as well as the international football community.
- Dedicated to teaching youth through positive role models.
- Emphasis on learning, playing, and enjoying the sport while instilling high moral standards by stressing the importance of academic achievement and community involvement.
- Helping kids become leaders and teammates.
- Fostering confidence and a sense of self-worth, in players that extend beyond the gridiron and into the school, family and community.

ORGANIZATION

American Youth Football is incorporated in Ohio as a non-profit corporation. American Youth Football is recognized by the IRS as a 501c3 tax exempt organization, with central organization status. AYF members may, subject to IRS rules and procedures, seek tax exempt status under AYF's IRS determination letter and status, by applying to AYF using the form and methods provided at www.MyAYF.com. AYF members receiving 501c3 status under AYF's group letter ruling, a copy of which is available for download at www.MyAYF.com, must file their own annual tax returns with the IRS on form 990, 990EZ or the 990 postcard, based on IRS published revenue guidelines.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A Board of Directors guides AYF. The Board is responsible for overseeing the National staff.. The AYF National Office conducts the day-to-day operations of AYF. This staff will be under the guidance of the President of AYF. Positions will be added to the staff as necessary, at the discretion of AYF's Board of Directors.

FOOTBALL ADVISORY BOARD

The AYF Football Advisory Board, as convened by AYF, is and or will be, composed of individuals whose knowledge and experience provide valuable advice and insight to issues that affect AYF.

ONLINE RESOURCES: WEBSITES

We operate multiple websites, which serve specific needs and services.

AmericanYouthFootball.com - is a general information website and is designed to educate our members and the general public about the programs, services we offer as well as the sponsors that support our youth football and cheer programs.

MyAYF.com - available exclusively to members, contains forms, tools, rule books and manuals, as well as other resources, including 501c3 application procedures, background check resources and sponsor offers. Each local

association is issued a password for access as a part of your annual membership fee. Your password is created upon registering online. If you do not have a password, please contact your conference representative or the AYF National Office by email to services@americanyouthfootball.com.

PlayAYF.com is an online player registration platform available to AYF member leagues, which makes the administration of your program seamless from collecting registration fees, to league administration, including rostering players, generating forms including MPR, as well as background checks, equipment tracking, player grades, and everything else that goes into administering a successful and well-run program.

JoinAYF.com is where AYF members go to register and renew their AYF membership. It is through www.joinayf.com that members create their passwords to access www.MyAYF.com

AYFchampionships.com features information, schedules, forms and updates relating to the American Youth Football and Cheerleading National championships and surrounding events. Don't miss out on all the fun and events connected to the National Championships, held each year in central Florida.

AYFcoaching.com is an online coaching course and resource, developed by Human Kinetics, the leading sports education and publisher. The coaching course is required for all coaches who plan to coach at the AYF National Championship tournament. Books are available for purchase, which highlight proper coaching techniques. The book is co-authored by American Youth Football president and Founder and former NFL, CFL, NCAA football coach Joe Galat.

SECTION 1 - MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE

AYF Members are legally distinct organizations, typically governed by an independent board of directors. AYF is non-intrusive in the operations of its independent members and seeks to provide support to our membership of football and cheer organizations regardless of their competitive engagement as a local or tournament member. AYF reserves the right to refuse and or terminate membership at will.

Organizations that DO NOT plan to participate in AYF inter-league competitions have the freedom to participate as a member of AYF; so long as the organization abides by AYF's core principles of:

- a focus on teaching,
- instilling sportsmanship in participants, and;
- encouraging participation.

Member organizations are solely responsible for creating a structure and adopting rules that specifically fit their respective organizational needs, however AYF teams who have committed to participating in AYF inter-league play, namely, AYF sanctioned events and the AYF National Championships, must adhere to the Rules and Eligibility Requirements as outlined in this Official Rulebook.

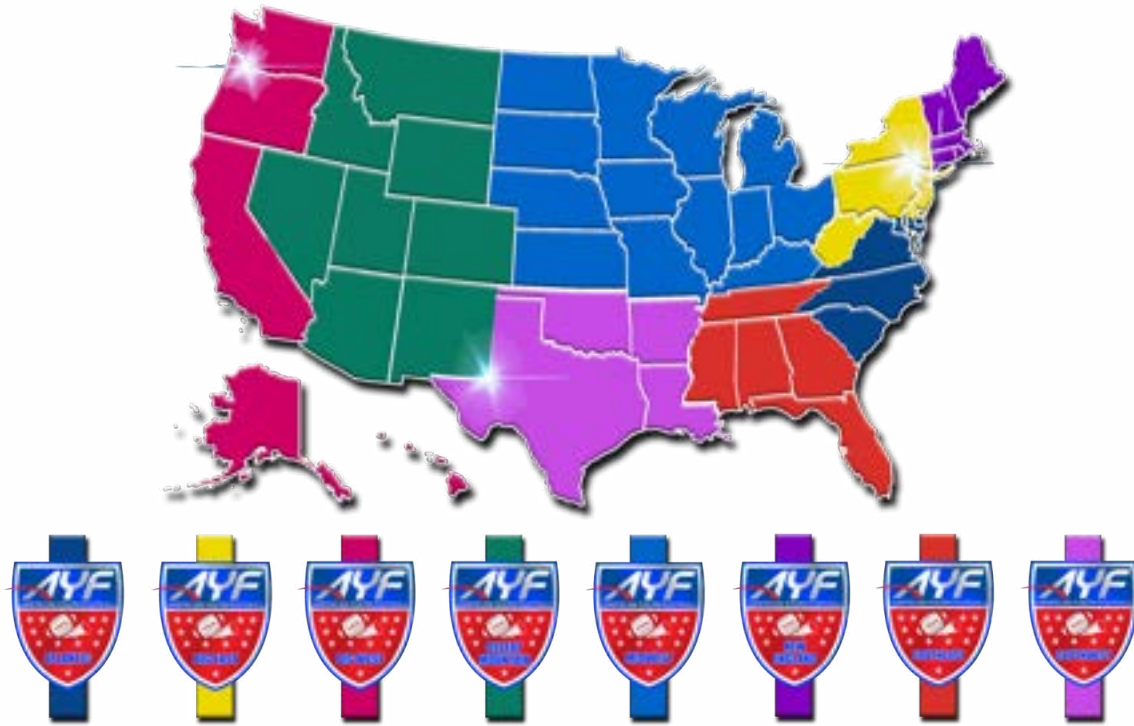
Each member organization, league and conference, are charged with the responsibility of enforcing its own rules, implementing and enforcing best practices and any guidelines presented in this Rule Book as applicable, including but not limited to game playing rules and being aware of the Eligibility Requirements, as set forth herein.

All Tournament members must make their intention to participate in the AYF National Tournament known to the current Applicable Regional Chairman by **September 1** of the current playing season.

SECTION 2 - STRUCTURE DEFINITIONS

REGION

A Region is defined as a geographic territory. The geographic territory is determined by the AYF National Office.



Regions are subject to change and are updated online between publications of this rule book.

A Region is composed of Member organizations organized as Associations and or Conferences within a geographic territory that has applied for and has been granted membership in AYF.

CONFERENCE

A Conference is defined by the geographic boundary of its members. A Conference's membership is composed of the Associations that have applied for, and have been granted membership by the Conference's governing body. In keeping with the American Youth Football's goals and philosophies, no application for membership should be unreasonably withheld. A Conference must have a minimum of 4 member associations with a minimum of three divisions per association to maintain National Championship Eligibility.

ASSOCIATION

An Association is an autonomous organization, whether legally formed or not, assembled for the purpose of organizing and operating a youth football and/or cheer program. Locals, cities, towns or community groups may organize associations.

BOUNDARIES

- I. A Conference may establish boundaries to prevent associations from drawing participants from outside defined geographic boundaries of another association that is a member of the same conference.
- II. A Conference may establish the acceptable method by which associations can register participants of any given association, which is a member of its conference.

- III. To ensure competitive fairness and for those organizations that participate in intramural play, the movement of a participant from one member Association to another must be strictly governed and enforced by the Conference/ Region to which it is a member and or by this Rulebook. When controversy exists over player movement or territorial boundaries or draw areas the AYF National Staff's opinion will be determinative.
- IV. *If a participant wants to play in another Conference, a waiver agreement must be signed by the Association President and Conference Commissioner of the home Association/Conference and the Association President and Conference Commissioner the player/participant wants to move to, this waiver agreement would be for one year only and kept with the player/participants' team paperwork. This protects the team/association/conference and player if a protest is filed. (*Violation of this section may result in termination of AYF membership)

PARTICIPANT

A Participant is defined as a minor child that has applied for and has been granted membership within a given Association, and or a coach, administrator or volunteer, who is an agent of a Member organization.

- I. *In keeping with the American Youth Football's goals and philosophies, participation enrollment/applications must be taken on a first come, first serve basis and teams must be formed regardless of player ability (see Formation of Teams contained in this rulebook) no participant enrollment/application should be unreasonably withheld and under no circumstances will an able bodied participant be discriminated against. (*Violation of this section may result in termination of AYF membership)

DIVISION

A division is defined as a grouping of teams in specific age based class. These Divisions are further defined under the heading of "Divisions" in this rulebook.

TEAM

A Team is defined as a collection of a maximum of 36 participants, who are grouped within an age group, who play and or intend to play football.

SECTION 3 - RULES ENFORCEMENT/AUTHORITY

NATIONAL LEVEL OF AUTHORITY - LIMITATIONS

- I. Member organizations may be placed on probation, suspension and or have their membership and associated benefits revoked, for a defined or indefinite period time, at the sole discretion of AYF, for actions on inactions related to the conduct of its member organizations. Member organizations are not afforded due process, any and all determinations made by AYF are final and can only be reversed by AYF at its sole discretion.
- II. The American Youth Football National Office may involve itself in the affairs of local matters and/or local rule violations at its sole discretion, based on the request of individual petitioners/complainants, or *sua sponte*, if the AYF National Office determines that its involvement is necessary to protect the integrity and or goodwill of the organization.
- III. Any determinations and actions taken by AYF may be made without due process to the affected party, any and all determinations made by AYF are final and can only be reversed by AYF at its sole discretion.

REGIONAL LEVEL OF AUTHORITY - LIMITATIONS

- I. Regional Committees are appointed by AYF, to inspect and enforce all of the AYF participant paperwork and requirements for compliance with AYF participant certification for regional and national tournaments..
- II. No participant or team shall be allowed to compete in a regional tournament game who has not met all of these requirements.

- III. The AYF National Office may call upon the Regional Committee(s) from time to time, to: (1) mediate disputes between member organizations and or individuals, (2) make recommendations to AYF for matters where mediation has not produced an acceptable result by and between the parties.
- IV. The respective Regional Committee will recommend a Conference(s) to host the regional championships. The hosting of regional championships should be considered a fundraiser and be rotated annually among the Conferences that apply to host.

CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION LEVEL OF AUTHORITY

- I. Conferences and or Associations, subject to their respective operating documents, are responsible for adopting policies and practices, to enforce rules as appropriate and to ensure the orderly operation of the organization on and off the field.
- II. Conferences and Associations, in accordance with their operating and or organizational documents and or procedures have the obligation and authority to enforce their by-laws, organizational materials, as well as properly adopted local rules and the appropriate AYF Model Rules, as adopted, considering the spirit of the respective rules. Additionally, Conferences and or Associations, within their by-laws and or organizational documents, may make any rule more stringent, but should not make these rules less strict. Any organization found operating an association, outside of the best practices and guidelines established by AYF, NFHS and or other governmental entities or rule making bodies may be suspended until compliance is achieved.
- III. All Conferences, Associations and Teams, should if they have not already, adopt procedures that contemplate and address how to (1) resolve disputes between member organizations and individuals, (2) discipline both adult and youth participants and (3) take action to ensure compliance with rules and compel the adoption of best recommendations, suggestions and best practices.

*American Youth Football, Inc. does not have a formal appeals process. Conferences, Associations and Teams are advised to set up their own procedures to handle these matters in a timely fashion.

SECTION 4 - GOVERNING RULEBOOK

AYF members that have committed to participating in the Regional and National competitions shall follow their state and/or high school governing rulebook for their regular season games, except where superseded by the Eligibility Requirements found in this Rulebook.

The National Federation of State High School Association (NFHS) except where superseded by AYF, will govern, for all inter-conference/tournament games including, but not limited to, regional and national competitions.

The AYF National Office will determine and be the final adjudicator on any and all conflicts between locally adopted rules and the Eligibility Requirements. AYF requires that all coaches receive and read this Rule Book, and strongly recommends that the local organizations supply the appropriate state and/or high school rulebook to all of its coaches.

GUARDIAN™ / CAPS



REDUCES 'HARM' UP TO 40%

HARM = HEAD ACCELERATION RESPONSE METRIC



SOFTENS BODY BLOWS

HELMETS TO KNEES, HIPS, HANDS



LIGHT WEIGHT < 1LB

APPLIES TO ALL MODELS



REDUCES RADIANT HEAT

UP TO 20°



RUTGERS CLINICAL STUDY

"The **use of Guardian Caps** and additional safety precautions **resulted in less severe impacts at the youth level.** The study revealed 88% of impacts as low intensity, 11% as medium intensity and **just 0.1% as high intensity.**"



SPECIAL PRICING

CODE: AYF

\$10 OFF/CAP

BULK PRICING



**WORN BY YOUTH,
HIGH SCHOOL, AND
COLLEGES.**

**TESTED, VALIDATED
AND MANDATED BY
THE NFL & CFL.**



770-667-6004 • SALES@GUARDIANSPORTS.COM • GUARDIANSPORTS.COM

No helmet, practice apparatus, or helmet pad can prevent or eliminate the risk of concussions or other serious head injuries while playing sports. Researchers have not reached an agreement on how the results of impact absorption tests relate to concussions. No conclusions about a reduction of risk or severity of concussive injury should be drawn from impact absorption tests.

SECTION 5 - DIVISIONS

2026 AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL ALL AMERICAN AGE DIVISIONS AGE PROTECTED - UNLIMITED WEIGHT COMPETITION DIVISIONS OF PLAY

DIVISION OF PLAY	AGE CUTOFF	TYPE
6U DIVISION 1 AND 2	6 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
7U DIVISION 1 AND 2	7 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
8U DIVISION 1 AND 2	8 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
9U DIVISION 1 AND 2	9 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
10U DIVISION 1, 2, 3	10 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
11U DIVISION 1, 2, 3	11 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
12U DIVISION 1, 2, 3	12 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
13U DIVISION 1, 2, 3	13 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
14U DIVISION 1 AND 2	14 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT

AGE DIVISIONS CAN BE COMBINED

2026 AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL CONFERENCE ALL STAR DIVISIONS AGE PROTECTED - UNLIMITED WEIGHT *AYF NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY ONLY*

DIVISION OF PLAY	AGE CUTOFF	TYPE
9U/10U	10 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
11U/12U	12 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
13U/14U	14 YEARS OR YOUNGER AS OF 7/01/26	UNLIMITED WEIGHT

AGE DIVISIONS CAN BE COMBINED

ALL AMERICAN DIVISION AGE CUT-OFFS

An age cutoff date of **July 01** of the current season is as follows: Whatever age you are on July 01, 2026 is your 2026 AYF age.

SPRING FOOTBALL/SUMMER PASSING LEAGUES

American Youth Football (AYF) recognizes both spring football and summer passing leagues. AYF recommends that any Conference, Association, Team participating in spring football and summer passing leagues do so by following the format established by their local high school or state high school athletic governing board(s).

Great care should be taken to not interfere with other spring and summer sports such as baseball, lacrosse and family vacations. American Youth Football requires that NO pressure be placed on individuals to participate. Coaches who *require* or in any way manipulate fall seasonal participants to join or participate in any way, or coaches who do not plan and allow for participation in other sports and family vacations, should be immediately suspended from coaching any team during the regular fall season. Outlines and ideas for spring football and summer passing leagues can be found at www.MyAYF.com.

DIVISION 1, DIVISION 2 AND DIVISION 3

All American Divisions offer Division 1, Division 2 and Division 3. Division 3 is offered for 10U-13U only. Division 2 Champions will be reviewed by AYF Staff on future return at this division.

CONFERENCES DECLARING DIVISION 2 AND DIVISION 3 STATUS

All conferences interested in offering D2 or D3 designations for All American play at the AYF Regional and National Tournament must fill out a D2 and/or a D3 Status Request Form which will include the conferences method for declaring and submit to the applicable Region Chairman by **August 15** of the current season, who will then forward to the AYF National Football Commissioner who will approve or deny the request in writing by **August 25** of the current season.

ACCEPTABLE METHODS FOR DIVISION 2 STATUS

1. Preseason D2 only designation prior to playing a regular season game. This designation must specify reasons why the conference is asking to be D2 (including geographic reasons, competition reasons, and past performance history in the AYF Regional and National Tournament)
2. Preseason D1/D2 Conference split designation. Example: a conference has 16 associations and splits the conference into D1 and D2 divisions who have a separate season and playoffs after they are completed the D1 and D2 champions advance to the AYF Regional and/or National Tournament.

POSTSEASON DESIGNATION

A conference has a MINIMUM of eight (8) teams, and has a postseason after the regular season is completed; conferences shall use the win-loss record of the eight (8) or more teams to determine D1 and D2 for the playoffs. Teams 1-4 play D1 playoffs, Teams 5-8 play D2 playoffs then the D1 and D2 champions advance to the AYF Regional and/or National Tournament. There is no postseason designation for Division 3, it is preseason designation only.

If a league finishes the regular season and declares a D1 and D2 champion for the AYF State/Regional/National Post Season and elects to have an overall D1/D2 championship game and the D2 wins the game, the winner will become the conference D1 representative, the D1 representative, who lost the game, will be eliminated from the AYF postseason.

ACCEPTABLE METHODS FOR DIVISION 3 STATUS

A conference may declare D3 status based on several factors, among which are ; population, strict boundary rules, recreation based conference, or past performance in States/Regionals competitive events in D2. The appropriate Regional Chairman will review D3 requests and forward them to the AYF National Office for approval. D3 Status will be strictly monitored and enforced.

*IF A CONFERENCE HAS LESS THAN EIGHT (8) TEAMS IN A DIVISION , THE CONFERENCE CAN APPLY TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE, IN WRITING, FOR AN EXCEPTION BY **AUGUST 1** OF THE CURRENT SEASON. THE EXCEPTION IS ONLY FOR CONFERENCES THAT HAVE LESS THAN EIGHT (8) BUT NO LESS THAN SIX (6) TEAMS IN A DIVISION. THE METHOD FOR SEVEN (7) TEAMS WILL BE 1-4 D1 AND 5-7 D2. THE METHOD FOR SIX (6) TEAMS WILL BE 1-3 D1 and 4-6 D2.

FLAG DIVISION

AYF has established model rules and regulations for flag football. These can be found at www.MyAYF.com. Flag football is a recommended addition to AYF Member programs, and can be a effective first step for new members looking to establish a football program, as flag football start-up costs are low, with limited equipment and no helmets or other tackle padding required. New and established Members, can benefit from operating a flag football program, in using the program to recruit youth participants to play football and the possibility of transitioning flag participants into tackle football programs. Flag football is useful to develop football skills that are relevant for tackle play. The minimum age for flag football is 4 years old.

SECTION 6 - INSURANCE REQUIREMENT

All teams must furnish proof of General Liability and Accident Insurance. The required limits, coverages and prohibited exclusions can be seen at www.MyAYF.com. Additionally, American Youth Football, Inc. must be named as an additional insured, our address for the certificate of insurances (COI) is 1000 South Pointe Drive TH-9, Miami, Fl. 33139. All members not covered under the AYF endorsed insurance policy are required to deliver (mail or email) to AYF a certificate of insurance to AYF prior to conducting any practices or games.

ALL CONFERENCES/ASSOCIATIONS/TEAMS/SQUADS must provide this documentation, no exceptions. Any team or squad participating in the Regional or National venues will not be allowed to take the field or stage until acceptable proof of insurance is provided.

THE MINIMUM GENERAL LIABILITY AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE LIMITS:

Accident: \$100,000

General Liability: \$1,000,000

For more information on the AYF-endorsed insurance plan, please visit www.MyAYF.com.

Tackle Football & Cheer Insurance

**Football & Cheer Insurance Plan
Endorsed by American Youth Football**



- Savings Up To 38%
- High Limits with Custom Coverage Enhancements
- Instant Online Quote/Pay/Print
- Simple Risk Management Programs for Your Adoption (Abuse, Molestation, Child Abuse, Brain Injury, Sports Violence, etc.,)

Go Online Now at www.sadlersports.com/ayf and Get A Quick Quote In 30 Seconds And Purchase Coverage In 5 Quick And Simple Minutes.

Immediately Print Your Proof of Coverage Documents and Claim Forms.

Our automation allows our clients to issue their own certificates for field owners, 24/7!

- [The Risks of Going Uninsured or Being Underinsured](#)
- [12 reasons the AYF insurance program blows away the competition](#)
- [Coverage descriptions of all 5 insurance policies](#)
- [What you need to know before you apply for coverage](#)

**John Sadler Explains On Short Video Why
AYF / AYC Insurance Program Is Superior
To Competition!**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NV3T5HUf0bY>

Check out our AMAZING LOW RATES – www.sadlersports.com/ayf

- Meets AYF/AYC Minimum Insurance Requirements For Regular Season And Regional/National Championships.
- Accident and General Liability Underwritten by "A (Excellent), X, A- (Excellent), XIV, and A+ (Superior), XV" Rated Carriers by A.M. Best Company
- Annual AYF/AYC Registration Fee is \$45 per team for tackle, \$30 per flag team, & \$45 per cheer squad (when registering online)

Optional Coverages available when accident/general liability plan is purchased:

DIRECTORS & OFFICERS LIABILITY

\$1,000,000 Directors & Officers Liability:
\$377 per governing board (except in Hawaii)
\$2,000,000 Directors & Officers Liability:
\$485 per governing board (except in Hawaii)

EQUIPMENT /CRIME INSURANCE

\$25,000 Crime Insurance
Equipment Coverage:
Rate based on Total Replacement value:
(\$300 minimum premium)

For more information about membership, visit www.myayf.com

Check out our Sports Insurance Blog: <http://www.sadlersports.com/blog/>

SADLER
SPORTS & RECREATION INSURANCE

P.O. Box 5866 Columbia, SC 29250

E-mail: ayf@sadlersports.com

Phone: 800-622-7370

SECTION 7 - FORMATION OF TEAMS

Formation of teams, shall be on a first come, first serve, and participation policy basis. AYF does however, allow registration/sign-up for “veteran (returning) players” prior to “open” registration/sign-up. Each child must be afforded the opportunity to be taught the game of football regardless of their ability. AYF does not form “select teams”. In other words, you cannot select or recruit only the best athletes for your team. Tryouts of any kind can only be done to determine what team level the participant will be placed on and to ensure that all teams are created equally and have similarly competitive skill levels.

DROPPING A PLAYER

Cutting of players is not allowed in AYF; however, there are certain guidelines that should be met if it becomes necessary to not assign a player to a team. AYF strongly recommends that the coaching staff work closely with these players, before the extreme measure of dropping a player occurs. AYF believes that the game of football may be constructive to the development of all youth participants.

When dropping a player will be acceptable:

1. When a participant is found to have signed up as a result of parent or guardian pressure, or he/she tells team personnel that he/she does not really want to play football/cheer.
2. When a participant cannot furnish the required documents to be certified to a team roster, (e.g., medical clearance, proof of birth date, etc.).
3. When a Participant shows no interest in football/cheer, it is disruptive to other participants and the instructions of the coaching staff and becomes a discipline problem.
4. When a Participant does not show up for practices, games and or other team events. Participants must have a valid excuse from the parent(s), guardian(s) or a physician when missing games, practices, and or team events.
5. When a Participant attempts to intimidate fellow participants by words and or physical acts.
6. When a Participant is actively a member of another football team or cheerleader squad while actively participating with an AYF team (for dual participation, some exceptions may apply).

When dropping a player IS NOT acceptable:

1. Excessive team or individual conditioning drills designed to encourage weaker players to quit.
2. Disciplinary actions or any sort of hazing, including but not limited to, assigning individual players' laps or intentionally placing player(s) in intimidating hitting drills for the purpose of encouraging weaker players to quit.

This is not acceptable behavior and coaches who use these or any other tactics to drop weaker players should be immediately dismissed by their local organization, for the remainder of the season and a permanent suspension should be considered.

DUAL PARTICIPATION

ALLOWED

1. FLAG FOOTBALL TEAM
2. GRADE OR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAM (8TH GRADE MAX)
3. 7 v 7 TEAM
4. ALL STAR GAME(S) or ALL STAR WEEKEND EVENTS

NOT ALLOWED

1. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL & AYF ROSTERED AT THE SAME TIME (GRADES 9 THRU 12)
2. 2 AYF TEAM ROSTERS
3. 2 YOUTH TACKLE REGULAR SEASON ROSTERS (1 AYF ROSTER & 1 ANY OTHER YOUTH TEAM/LEAGUE ROSTER)
4. 2 POST SEASON NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP ROSTERS ON 2 SEPARATE TEAMS (1 AYF ROSTER & 1 ANY OTHER YOUTH TEAM ROSTER)

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Conferences are required to establish “Draw Areas” or “Boundaries” for its member Associations. Should an organization/team wish to accept the application of a participant (special participant) who is (1) outside of the Association's defined Draw Area, or (2) previously listed on a roster with another Association, it must provide full disclosure of these conditions to the Conference members they participate with and receive permission from the Conference in a manner to be determined by the Conference. Permission should only be granted on a limited basis when it is in the best interest of the participant and when it is determined that the participant has NOT been recruited. Conferences are required to create and enforce rules and regulations to prevent one Association from recruiting the players of another Association.

A AND B TEAM(S)/SQUAD(S)

Associations that have many participants at a specific team level may form multiple squads, hereinafter referred to as A and B squads. Associations may roster participants on either the A or B team as their Conference/Association rules and regulations allow. However, the association may not “stack” one team over the other by intentionally placing all the most talented players on the A team in order to qualify for tournament play. Players can not be cut from teams, or be placed on a waiting list with the sole intention to form a superior squad/select team.

ALL STAR TEAMS

The formation of an “All Star” Team is only permitted for Inter-Conference play. Conferences may establish an All Star game (e.g., east vs. west) at the same Team level at the end of its regular season only. No Participant certified on a team that is still actively participating in postseason play is allowed to also participate on the All Star Team.

Conferences may choose to name an All Star team or All Conference team as an honorary designation, without playing a game. AYF fully recognizes this honor.

All Star selection, with or without game participation, should require the highest of Academic Standards and should be reserved for the oldest players only.

AYF Conference All Star and AYF National All Star teams are excluded from this rule.

Details on the AYF Conference All Stars and AYF National All Stars can be found at the end of this Rulebook.

SECTION 8 - PRACTICE/CONDITIONING/TRAINING CAMPS

START DATES

The AYF National Championship playing season may start as early as **July 1** and extend until **December 31** of the current year. Start and end dates of the playing season may be modified for teams playing in regions with extreme weather conditions, (ie Arizona summers, and Alaskan winters) . Written permission by the AYF National Office is required before any such modifications may be made. A later start date may occur for any league.

No Conference shall commence team practice until **July 1**, with the first week being dedicated to Ten (10) Hours of conditioning ONLY, before full contact is allowed.

CONDITIONING/TRAINING CAMP

1. Conditioning activities/training camp may begin on **July 1**, activities are limited to ten (10) hours maximum, per week.
2. After the first regular season game is played, practice is limited to eight (8) Hours per week. (First thru end of Season Games Prep time = eight (8) hours per week, NO EXCEPTIONS).
3. MANDATORY TEN (10) MINUTE BREAKS EVERY HOUR ARE REQUIRED BUT ARE NOT COUNTED TOWARD THE PRACTICE TIME. AT A MINIMUM HYDRATION SHOULD BE OFFERED DURING EACH BREAK.
4. All players, regardless of when they join the team, must have at least one (1) week (10 Hours) of conditioning before they are allowed to engage in live contact drills/play. Even if a player joins the team after the start of the regular season schedule, the ten (10) hours of conditioning requirement must be met.
5. NFHS heat illness guidelines as regards practice modification, postponement, and cancellation should be followed including the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) chart. A WBGT meter (preferable) or WBGT smart phone app (less accurate) should be readily available and used for decision making. A cold-water immersion tub should be on location.

COACHING STAFF REQUIREMENTS

1. At least one (1) coach must be present during every practice.
2. Each and every coach must complete a third-party criminal background check performed and reviewed/ approved by the process established by the Association/Conference. The criminal background check at a minimum must provide a 50-state national database check as well as a 50-state sexual offender registry check. The conference/association/league may choose to provide a more comprehensive criminal background check.
3. The Head Coach & All Assistant Coaches MUST be" Human Kinetics/Coaching Youth Football the AYF Way Certified or have been previously Human Kinetics" certified and or have taken the" Coaching Youth Football the AYF Way Refresher Course" annually, after having been initially certified. The courses can be found at www.ayfcoaching.com.
4. There shall be at least one (1) person holding a Red Cross Card (CPR), or of similar equivalency, present at all practices. This can be a coach, or any volunteer approved by the Association.

5. ALL Regional/National Football coaches are required to complete the free NFHS Tackling Course online. ALL coaches must present proof of this course completion for eligibility to participate at the Regional and National Tournaments. The course can be found on www.MyAYF.com.
6. Documentation that the coaching staff (each coach) has successfully passed the course/seminar/class or online course tests must be included in the team book.
7. Championships. Certificates must be kept in the team book for certification purposes. The Human Kinetics refresher courses will be required to comply with the AYF/AYC Eligibility Requirements.
8. Conferences are required to enforce these “Staff Requirements” with its member Associations.

Conferences/Leagues and Association may enforce stricter rules on Concussion Courses and Clinics.

***Special Note: When attending the AYF National Championships there are a limited number of coaches and field personnel credentials given out. Make sure your staff is aware of this. A MAX of 10 staff participation credentials will be issued per team, to rostered staff members only.**

PRACTICE/GAME RESTRICTIONS

The following Drills and Warm-up Exercises are hereby banned from all AYF activities. Leg Lifts, Neck Bridges, Neck Rolls, Bull in the Ring, Barrel Rolls, and all drills and exercises not generally accepted as safe and that may not be reflective of actions that would normally occur during the course of a football game.

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) rulebooks contain strong language on blocking and tackling. AYF coaches are responsible to be fully informed and abide by all such rules of their state’s governing body (NFHS or NCAA). AYF coaches are also responsible to review these rules every year. In addition to other specific prohibitions in the NFHS and NCAA rulebooks, butt blocking, chop blocking, face tackling, or spearing techniques are strictly prohibited. If such techniques or any others forbidden by the NFHS or NCAA rulebooks are taught, the coaches responsible shall be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to probation upon the first offense and suspension for the remainder of the season upon the second offense. Associations are encouraged to establish their own rules, regulations and monitoring of their coaches. Coaches assume all liability for their actions or inactions.

Practice contact restrictions should be implemented per applicable NFHS guidelines or state law.

Equipment Note: Helmet visors are not allowed according to the NFHS rulebook, unless it is completely clear and glass-like. If a visor is slightly tinted and a game official/referee can see the tint on his game data card the visor must be removed. There are no exceptions.

Uniform Numbers are under NFHS Guidelines 0-99 with the exception of 00 being allowed as well. NO Roman Numerals, Emojis, or other symbols, or images are allowed to be worn at the AYF States/Regionals/Nationals.

SECTION 9 - PLAYING SEASON GAMES

GAME CLOCK DETAILS/PLAYING REQUIREMENTS/NUMBER OF PLAYERS

1. Only 10-minute quarters will be utilized in all divisions/class of play within AYF. Maximum half time allowed will be 15 minutes.
2. Each team will have three (3) timeouts per half in all AYF games. Timeouts are not charged against a team for injuries or game officials' timeouts.
3. A maximum of 16 regular season games including Conference championships are allowed.

It is required that each team must have the minimum number of 13 players, eligible and able to participate, to start a regulation or play-off game. It is required that each team must have the minimum number of 13 players, eligible and able to participate, to start a regulation or local playoff game. For the Regional championship game/state championship (qualifying game for berth at the National Championships) and first games of National Championship play, each team must have a minimum of 16 players eligible and able to participate. If the number of players falls below 11 players, the game will be forfeited. Exception Divisions 6u & 7u May Form & Compete All Season with a minimum of 13 players, this includes all post season games, states, regionals, and nationals.

*If a team falls below 16 players due to injury only (injury must be proven with verified medical record), a waiver of the 16 player rule may be granted at the discretion of the National Football Commissioner.

Football games are to be scheduled no more than one (1) game per week with a minimum of 48 hours (2 days) between games. The AYF National Office reserves the right to waive this rule when extenuating circumstances exist or to accommodate a championship tournament.

COACHING COMMUNICATIONS

There will be no electronic devices from the press box, coaching box, sidelines or any other position on the field that may be used to relay messages to the coaches or players at any time. Electronic devices include, but are not limited to, the use of a cell phone, computers, tablets, iPads, smart phones or any other messaging devices. All bluetooth earpiece devices including, but not limited to, AirPods and other wireless headphones are not allowed within the field of play. A coach using a cell phone for emergency purposes must step outside the coach's box, off the playing field. If it continues, the coach may be asked to leave the field for the remainder of the game. Further disciplinary action may be taken by the Conference.

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

AYF requires the home team or hosting organization to provide medical coverage at each game. In the absence of a physician and or ambulance on site, the minimum requirement will be the presence of an individual who is a Certified Athletic Trainer, EMT-certified, or is currently certified in Red Cross Community First Aid and Safety or its equivalent. Therefore, no game shall start without proper medical assistance on hand.

Coaches MUST have all emergency medical release forms and parent/guardian emergency contact information (i.e. phone numbers) in their possession at all times when the team is practicing, traveling or playing in any game or competition.

Home team or hosting organization is required to introduce the emergency medical personnel to the visiting team and to review the emergency medical plan with the visiting team. The emergency medical plan shall include but not be limited to (1) ambulatory access to the field, (2) directions to the facility, (3) location of the emergency communication device, in the absence of a cell phone, and the emergency medical services numbers, as well as the local fire and police numbers.

Once an injured participant is removed from the game, they may not re-enter the game unless first approved by the highest medical authority covering the event that will make the final decision regarding injuries on the field and the ability for a player to return. If present, the licensed/certified athletic trainer will make the final medical decision unless a medical doctor is present and covering the activity.

In the case of a diagnosed or suspected concussion a player may not return to the game or next game without a written consent to resume participation/return to play form from a medical doctor. A sample, AYF Doctors' Resume Participation Consent/Return to Play Form can be found online on www.MyAYF.com.

SANCTIONED FOOTBALL

The AYF Sanctioned football manufacturer is Wilson®. AYF strongly recommends using an AYF Wilson® football (leather or composite) during regular season games.

As the exclusive ball of the postseason, AYF requires the use of a Wilson® football during all AYF-sanctioned tournament and postseason play. This includes regional tournaments and the AYF National Championships. A team can play with their own game ball ONLY if it is an AYF Wilson® Football; if teams do not bring their own AYF Wilson® Game Ball, one will be provided at game time. The following is the recommended size breakdown per team level. To order official AYF Wilson® Footballs – visit www.MyAYF.com.

DIVISION	BALL SIZE
Instructional 6U-9U	Wilson® K2
10U, 11U, 12U	Wilson® TDJ
13U	Wilson® TDY
14U	Wilson® TDY or TDS *Team has the option

SCORING, TIE BREAKERS, LOPSIDED RULE

Touchdown	6 points
Scoring play after touchdown (running or passing)	1 point
Scoring play after touchdown (kicking)	2 points
Safety (awarded to opponent)	2 points
Field goal	3 points
Forfeit	Score of game 6-0
Ties	Declared at the end of regulation

AYF will allow each Conference to set their own tie-breaker system if needed for regular season play, however, “Sudden Death” tiebreakers are prohibited.

AYF Inter-Conference, Regional and National Tournament/Championship Games will utilize the ten (10) yard Tie-Breaker System, as stated in the National Federation of State High School Association (NFHS) Rulebook. The NFHS tie-breaker rules amended to start from the 10-yard line.

An intentionally run-up score occurs when a team continues to *pour it on* even after the game is in their favor and far out of reach for their opponents. Coaches who practice this are to be disciplined by the local Conference/Association. AYF considers this type of coaching contrary to its values.

The AYF *lopsided score rule* is 35 Points or 5 touchdowns, whichever comes first. Once the score differential reaches 35 points or 5 touchdowns, the game clock will become a running clock and stay a running clock for the remainder of the contest and a win is automatically declared. Once the clock becomes a running clock it can only be stopped for injuries, official or team time outs. It will be the losing team’s preference as to whether they will

receive a normal kickoff, or they may choose to take the ball on their own 40-yard line. The winning team is prohibited from running any misdirection, counter, reverses or “trick plays” of any kind, or any play that has been consistently run with success during the game. Skill position starters must be replaced whenever possible. Conferences and Associations cannot limit the winning team to only running between the tackles. Mandatory plays must be completed regardless of the score or game clock. If the winning team does not complete their required mandatory plays, the full force of the mandatory play rules will be in effect.

Conferences are required to investigate/review all reported losses of more than 35 points or 5 touchdowns. Conferences are required to establish their own disciplinary actions for coaches that are determined to have intentionally run-up the score, in all cases an appeal process must be afforded to the coach, unless the coach has signed acceptance of an agreement prior to the start of the season indicated that the conference will not allow appeals of its disciplinary decision.

REGIONAL/NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

Special Warning Regarding Rumors: No one should be allowed to participate in a local, regional or national event until all of his or her paperwork has been verified. Any allegations of cheating or violations of this Rulebook or any local rule or regulation should be immediately reported, in writing, to either the Association and/or Conference president or their appointed representative for dealing with such issues. Associations and Conferences are required to fully investigate all claims, and keep on file a written record of all investigations.

Once the allegations of cheating or rules violation have been reported in writing to the respective official, whether it be Association or Conference, there shall be NO further discussion until it is reviewed, investigated and acted on appropriately by the Association and/or Conference. The act of spreading rumors, which is general talk not based on fact, will not be tolerated in American Youth Football.

Any allegation of cheating or violations of this Rulebook during postseason play should be reported in writing to the AYF National Office for inquiry. Given these facts, any organization, individual or group of individuals (which includes any member of the organization) spreading rumors of cheating, special treatment or any other false information, whether causing an incident or not during a regional or national event may be banned from participation in any future regional or national events for a period deemed reasonable by the AYF National Office.

SECTION 10 - PROTESTS

Conferences have complete jurisdiction over protests concerning all games within their programs. Conferences may choose at their sole discretion whether protests of any kind are allowed. Conferences should maintain consistency with this discretion.

Protests on matters of judgment rendered by any game official WILL NOT be heard under any circumstances.

All protests must be in writing and submitted to the local Conference-designated person no later than 24 hours after termination of the game in question. Conferences have the responsibility of calling a hearing within 48 hours after receipt of the protest, or in the event of a holiday, the following business day.

AYF NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS PROTESTS

Protests must be made in writing, without exception, via email to the AYF National Football Commissioner (dee@americanyouthfootball.com) within six (6) hours of the completion of the game in protest. All protests must clearly state the applicable rule/policy in the National Rulebook being challenged, as well as page number and section. All protests require a \$100.00 protest fee to be paid. If you win the protest, you will be refunded the

\$100.00. If you lose the protest, the \$100.00 will go into the AYF National Scholarship Fund. Once a protest is reviewed by AYF, you will be contacted as to when the meeting will take place. All protest decisions made by AYF are FINAL and are not eligible for appeal.

SECTION 11 - PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION/ELIGIBILITY

Note: Falsifying birth or any other documents to make a participant eligible is grounds for forfeiture of all games in which the participant participated, and permanent suspension of the adult(s) and or organization responsible for the act. All evidence will be turned over to the local authorities for criminal prosecution when and where appropriate.

- A. **Waiver/Release Consent to Play:** Parents or legal guardians are required to furnish to local associations a written statement declaring their consent for their child to participate in local and any AYF activities and that they understand the risks involved. The written and signed statements must include a: Waiver/Release.

Sample copies of these documents and Regional/National team book format Instructions can be found online at www.MyAYF.com. Teams, leagues and associations should consult with local legal counsel to determine if these sample forms meet their individual needs.

- B. **Emergency Information & Consent to Treat:** This document must contain emergency medical information, emergency contacts and consent to treat in the event of a medical emergency. This form must be in the possession of the team at all times in the event an injury occurs.

- C. **Medical Clearance:** All AYF participants must deliver to their local association proof of medical clearance before participating in AYF programs. This includes but is not limited to preseason practice. The medical clearance must attest to, or contain the statement:

"I, hereby my signature below, do certify that I am licensed by the state and am qualified in determining that: _____ (Child's Name:) is physically fit and I have found no medical or observable conditions which would contra-indicate him/her from participating in youth flag football, tackle football, cheer or dance athletic activities. I am, therefore, clearing this individual for athletic participation without limitation."

This document will be good for one year from the date it was signed. A sample copy of an acceptable document can be found online at www.MyAYF.com.

AYF/AYC highly recommends that each child that participates in an AYF/AYC program receive baseline pre-concussion testing prior to the start of conditioning/training camp.

- D. **Age Certification:** AYF requires that all participants present to their local association an original record of their birth. AYF strongly recommends the use of state-issued DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) ID cards, certified copy or a notarized photocopy of their original birth certificate or a copy of the birth certificate with a state-issued identification card that requires an original birth certificate (or equivalent) for issuance. These documents shall set forth the date and year of birth and can be a certificate from the state, county or city bureau of vital statistics, department of health, and the department of motor vehicles, school certificates or record of notification of birth registration by the Bureau of Census of the U.S. Department of Commerce. passports, military ID cards are also acceptable. These documents must be

presented to the Conference officials for verification and are part of the mandatory player certification process.

NO HOSPITAL CERTIFICATES WILL BE ACCEPTED. The age certification date is specified under “Divisions”.

- E. **Scholastic Eligibility:** All participants must have received a passing grade average for the school year ending just prior to the beginning of the season (e.g., school year ending June 2026 for the Fall 2026 season) to be eligible for AYF participation. If verification of grades is necessary, or if passing grades are not achieved, the Parent/Guardian/School administrator can make the final ruling regarding scholastic eligibility as to whether continued participation will benefit the participant. Each team will be required to submit an AYF Affidavit of Scholastic Eligibility (see form myayf.com) to participate in Regional and National Tournament play.
- F. **Image Release:** Parents and or legal guardians are required to furnish to American Youth Football, a release which allows for the use of still and video images of their child, which may be used by AYF for marketing, promotional and other commercial purposes. Sample copies of these documents and Regional/National team book format Instructions can be found online at www.MyAYF.com.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL A CHILD BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY ACTIVITY UNTIL ALL PAPERWORK IS COLLECTED AND CERTIFIED.

SECTION 12 - ROSTERS

- A. Associations must have all AYF Required Participant Paperwork collected, complete, and inspected for compliance by **August 31**. Conferences must certify that their Associations have met this requirement and have a system in place for paperwork and roster certification. A *Certified Roster* means that all of the participants listed on the roster have submitted the AYF required paperwork and that all paperwork is authentic and compliant with AYF rules and regulations, and the participant fits the criteria established for the specific team level and division to which the Participant is certified. Conferences must maintain in their possession a copy of the final certified copy of all rosters. Players added to the roster after **August 31** must be certified prior to participating in any game but no later than **September 15**.
- B. The maximum number of participants allowed on a certified roster is 36. The minimum number of participants required to certify a roster is 16. (See minimum number of players required to play a regulation game *Section 9: Playing Season Games*).
- C. Under no circumstances shall a player be placed on two rosters/teams in the same Association, Conference, or any other youth football organization.
- D. Once a participant has played in the league's first regular season or scheduled game, he is not eligible to move to another team within the conference or an AYF conference for that season.
- E. Conferences must receive all their Associations rosters and certify all their player documentation by **September 15**. Conferences must maintain in their possession a copy of the final certified copy of all rosters. Conferences must then submit all rosters to the AYF National Office by **October 1** via the www.MyAYF.com roster portal.
- F. Conferences must submit a copy of the same rosters to the designated National Football Commissioner by

September 19, submissions shall be made by entering them into the www.MyAYF.com system, or such other system as allowed by AYF, by the deadline of **September 19**, of the current playing season. Failure to submit rosters and certificates of insurance may result in the loss of certain services provided by AYF, including postseason and championship game eligibility.

- G.** A rostered participant may not move from one AYF roster to another AYF roster within the same conference or another AYF conference once they have played in one regular season game or ANY game played after **September 1**. In extraordinary circumstances, the Conference President may elect to allow a player to move from one team to another if it is determined that it fits into one of the following criteria: the family/child moves out of the leagues boundaries, documented proof of improper behavior by a member of the coaching staff, documented proof that the player has/is being bullied. Under no circumstances will a lack of playing time be considered for such an exception and all exceptions must be found with proof, (baseless allegations will be ignored/denied by the conference president).
- H. Special Note regarding Conference (Local or Championship) Duties:**
- a. All Conferences must verify that their Associations or individual teams procure insurance (if not purchased by the Conference). Conference staff must make sure that the Association/Teams' insurance coverage protects the children in flag, tackle, cheer, dance, and step, all conference employees, agents and or volunteers, the Association, the Conference and AYF. All Conferences/Associations/Teams must have and provide a Certificate of Insurance in the name of American Youth Football, Inc., see Section 7, for address.

SECTION 13 - MANDATORY PLAY RULES

- A.** All rostered players **MUST** play an active role in each game. Unless noted prior to the start of the game, by absence or by injury.
- B.** All AYF participants **MUST** play an active role in a minimum number of plays as follows:
- 31 - 36 Players = 4 Plays
 - 26 - 30 Players = 6 Plays
 - 16 - 25 Players = 8 Plays

The number of plays required is determined by the numbers of players able to participate at the start of each game.

All plays run in the game count (offense, defense, special teams, & extra pts.), except, any penalties resulting in the replay of the down, do not count as plays. Also plays that result in a quarterback dropping to his knee or spiking the football with the sole purpose of "playing it safe" or "stopping the clock" do not count as plays.

A team may declare prior to the start of the game that one player can be exempt From The MPR requirement. This exemption is only for a player that will kick-off, kick extra points, or punt the football. This exempted player cannot, under any circumstances, play any other position (referenced above) on the field for the entire game that they were declared exempt.

All participants must receive their minimum mandatory number of plays by the end of the 3rd quarter. Any participant that has not received their minimum plays by the end of the 3rd quarter must enter the game and remain in the game until they have received their required number of plays.

Designating a player as “Disciplined” at the Regional or National tournament will not be an acceptable means of meeting the Mandatory Play Requirement without the approval of the National Football Commissioner. No player may be designated as “Injured” as an acceptable means of meeting the mandatory play requirement without the onsite trainer’s evaluation and designation.

- C. Each team will supply two adults, 18 years of age or older, to monitor the mandatory play rule. Failure to supply two adults as described will be considered a violation of the mandatory play rule and may result in the forfeiture of the game.
- D. Any person assigned to be a mandatory play monitor must be instructed to be respectful while on the opponent’s sideline or working with the opponent’s volunteer. There is to be no excessive cheering, cell phone use and no coaching of any kind.. At any time, the opponent for any reason may ask that the volunteer be replaced. This request must be complied with immediately without question. Failure to comply will be considered a violation of the mandatory play rule and may result in the forfeiture of the game.
- E. Conferences shall enforce the mandatory play rule. Any team not meeting the mandatory play rule requirements/obligations, shall forfeit their game. Additional minimum penalties: First offense for the head coach: probation. Second offense for the head coach: suspension for one game and one week of practice. Third offense: suspension for remainder of season. If it is the last game: suspension for the first half of the following season’s games. In the event a suspension should carry over into the next season, the Association that may appoint the offending coach will be obligated to enforce the suspension.
- F. The exception to this penalty is the following: In Conference/League Championship play-off games the penalty is: Head Coach suspended for one game and one week of practice. In the case of the regional or national play-off games the penalty is: head coach is suspended for one game.

If you do not have a Mandatory Play Form (MPR), please use the official AYF MPR Form found online at www.MyAYF.com.

SECTION 14 - COACHING REQUIREMENTS/BACKGROUND CHECKS/SCOUTING

- A. Associations are required to perform third party criminal background checks on all of their Coaches and any and all volunteers deemed to have repeated contact with Participants, each year. At a minimum, such a criminal background check should include a 50-state national database check and a 50-state sexual offender registry check. In addition, associations must comply with the Safe Sport Act which requires the adoption of a written risk management program including a mandatory requirement to notify law enforcement within 24 hours in the event of a suspicion of child abuse; policies to make an incident less likely to occur such as the use of the buddy system; adult staff and minor participant education on the various types of child abuse, how to prevent the sexual grooming process, and how to report a suspicion. Sadler Sports & Recreation Insurance provides a sample program entitled Safe Sport Child Abuse And Other Misconduct Plan at www.sadlersports.com/ayf. Conferences are required to obtain an affidavit that all background checks have been completed and compliance with the Safe Sport Act from their member associations. Conferences must submit all collected affidavits to the AYF National Office.
- B. American Youth Football, Inc. has no control over the selection of volunteers, each Association shall be required to indemnify and hold harmless American Youth Football, Inc. against all legal actions based upon

allegations arising from a failure to enforce all or part of this regulation and or the decision making process used in volunteer selection.

- C. All coaches must be approved by and serve at the pleasure of the local Association. Coaching assignments are for one playing season only and are therefore automatically terminated at the close of each season. Coaches must re-apply for coaching positions annually. The close of the season will be determined by the local Association.
- D. All coaching appointments and their appropriate contact info must be submitted to the AYF National Office each year by **August 31**.
- E. Head coaches must be at least 21 years old. The coaching staff will be under his/her direction and supervision.
- F. Assistant coaches must be at least 18 years old and have graduated from high school or hold a GED Certificate. They must have a general knowledge of the game of football.
- G. Coach Trainees must be a minimum of 15 years old and may only carry out the instructions of the Head or Assistant coaches.
- H. Each Team must have a Coach or volunteer that is the holder of a current Red Cross Certificate in Community CPR and First Aid or its equivalent, in addition all coaches and Red Cross Certified volunteers must attend and complete a course on www.ayfcoaching.com.

Head coaches are in complete charge of their players. They are responsible for their own actions or inactions, their assistants' actions or inactions and the actions of their players.

- I. Head coaches may be required to be certified through any available training program available to their Association/Conference. The Association/Conference may also make this a requirement of assistant coaches.
- J. Any football coach participating in the AYF regional and/or national championships is required to satisfactorily complete the AYF/AYC Online Coaches Course or the yearly refresher course, found at www.ayfcoaching.com.

For online Coaching Certifications, coaching resources and special AYF member background check services visit www.MyAYF.com.

AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL COACHES CERTIFICATIONS

ALL HEAD COACHES ARE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING COURSES/TASKS

1. HUMAN KINETICS COACHING FOOTBALL THE AYF WAY. IF TAKEN PREVIOUSLY, THE HUMAN KINETICS FOOTBALL REFRESHER COURSE - www.ayfcoaching.com
2. NFHS Tackle Course (FREE) - www.MyAYF.com

ALL ASSISTANT COACHES ARE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING COURSES/TASKS

1. HUMAN KINETICS COACHING YOUTH FOOTBALL THE AYF WAY. IF TAKEN PREVIOUSLY, THE HUMAN KINETICS FOOTBALL REFRESHER COURSE - www.ayfcoaching.com

2. NFHS Tackle Course (FREE) - www.MyAYF.com

The new online course includes an electronic version of the Coaching Youth Football, Sixth Edition book (accessible as a PDF from within the course) and features reading assignments, interactive activities, video clips, unit quizzes, and a comprehensive test. Also included in the course is a handy Coaches' Clipboard feature that houses accessible forms, checklists, drill sheets, and sample season and practice plan that coaches can download, print, and share. Course takers have access to the course and its online resources for an entire year. The 30-item online test is scored automatically. Coaches who pass the test can print a certificate of course completion directly from the website to document their achievement.

The new Coaching Youth Football the AYF Way online course is required for all first-time and returning AYF football coaches. AYF tournament team coaches will need to provide documentation of successful course completion with their tournament entry forms.

The online course is offered through AYF's exclusive coaching education provider Human Kinetics Coach Education through the AYF Coaching Education Center website at www.AYFCoaching.com. The price of the course is displayed on the website; discounted rates may be available when buying 25 or more courses. Administrators interested in purchasing courses in bulk should contact Human Kinetics' Mark Allemand at MarkA@hkusa.com or 800-747-5698, ext. 2212.

Minimum scouting rules are as follows: any videotaping allowed by your local Conference is prohibited from the field level end zone. Scouting of any kind during a team's practice session is strictly prohibited. Any coach, team member or associate found or determined to be scouting another teams' practice will be cause for the immediate suspension of the person involved and the head coach. AYF will allow scouting of teams during postseason play in the form of video and written reports, as long as the minimum rules listed above are followed.

SECTION 15 - COACHES AND ADMINISTRATORS PLEDGE

All administrators and volunteers are bound by the "Pledge," "Code" and "Standard of Conduct."

Each game and practice I participate in or administer over will provide me with an opportunity to be a Champion of Character. I pledge, as an AYF member to accept the five core character values of American Youth Football and will do my best to represent AYF, my Conference, my Association, my Team, and myself by: respecting my opponent, the officials, my team, my administrators, coaches, myself and the game; taking responsibility for my actions in all areas of my life; having the integrity to stand by my word; providing leadership where I serve others while striving to be a personal and team leader; and being an example of sportsmanship by holding myself to the highest standards of fair play.

Coaches can make a conscious choice to uphold the best of values. Individual players can make choices that will define them as athletes. American Youth Football believes in the following five core values.

- Leadership
- Integrity
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Sportsmanship

The five core values can be exemplified as described below.

How an athlete shows LEADERSHIP

Selflessness – Teamwork, has the ability to put the team ahead of self in every decision, accepts and fulfills a role.

Enthusiasm - Plays for the love of the game, shares it with teammates, brings it every day.

How an athlete shows INTEGRITY

Integrity - Tells the truth, keeps commitments, does not lie, cheat, or steal, purity of intent. Honorable and genuine, being worthy of respect.

How an athlete shows RESPECT

Teachable Spirit - Takes correction as a compliment. Consistently seeks new information. Is eager to learn.

Work Habits - Commits to hard, productive work. Commits to continuous improvement.

Attentiveness - Listens to coaches and teammates. Concentrates on the task at hand.

Confidence - Quiet, inner feeling based on preparation, not arrogance. Values the work and accomplishments of the team – is not arrogant. Shared joy of the inner circle. Does not require or expect special treatment. Proud, feels a sense of dignity.

How an athlete shows RESPONSIBILITY

Academic Progress - Turns in assignments on time. Assumes responsibility for academic effort. Maintains academic eligibility. Covers all responsibilities for any classes missed due to travel.

Accountability - Accepts responsibility for outcomes. Solves problems – does not make excuses. Looks to self-first when improvement is needed. Can be counted on by self and teammates.

Mental Toughness - Nothing breaks spirit – stays enthusiastic, confident and positive.

Determination - Is a self-starter, recovers from mistakes quickly. Accepts and embraces discipline for the benefit of the team, and exhibits self-control on and off the field. Focuses attention and effort.

Competitive - Is determined to work within the rules of the game to be successful. Makes a quick recovery from mistakes or misfortune.

How an athlete shows SPORTSMANSHIP

Sportsmanship - Respects the rules and the game. Respects and accepts the judgment of others. Respects opponents as guests and reacts correctly, even when others do not.

SECTION 16 - COACHES AND ADMINISTRATORS CODE

- I believe in the power of athletics as a program for the training of youth for a strong and efficient democracy.
- I believe in athletics for the building of good character and personality.
- I believe in athletics as a significant part of a sound educational program.
- I believe in athletics as a constructive force in the lives of millions of sports followers throughout our nation. Therefore, I will hold sportsmanship and fair play high above all other values to be gained through sports participation.
- I consider the privilege of guiding youth through participation in sports as a sacred trust.
- I will always keep the best interests of each participant as my aim. I shall never be guilty of enhancing my progress by the use of a participant's skill for my benefit.
- I will forever keep before the participants under my direction the high ideals, honesty, sincerity, and integrity which have made our nation great. I will not encourage, or tolerate, any form of trickery or evasion of rules in order to gain an advantage over an opponent.
- I will do all in my power to instill in those under my direction a tolerance for all races and creeds, and I will stand out against intolerance wherever it may occur.
- I will strive to instill in every youth great purposes and aims in living and will use the desire to play not as an end, but as a training ground for the participant's highest development.
- I will strive to teach each participant to be humble in victory and gracious in defeat, to be above bragging or using alibis, and shall help develop inner strength and poise.
- I will use only fair and honest means in my desire for personal achievement and shall count the goodwill of my peers far above any achievement unfairly gained.
- I will not sacrifice the values to be gained through a wholesome enjoyment of challenging sports activity for institutional pride or commercial ends.
- I will use only fair and honest means of securing talent for athletic teams and never stoop to trickery or insincere promises in influencing participants in the selection of their experience.
- I will use every means at my command to protect the moral, mental and physical health of the participants under my guidance and will never be party to the use of athletics for the financial or political gain of any office or group.
- I will encourage each participant to avail himself/herself of the best experience to be gained in a well-rounded education and to progress normally toward graduation. I will never encourage participation in athletics as an end in itself.
- I will help each participant under my guidance toward the development of honest habits of work and pride in work well done and I shall not practice or allow evasion in any obligation surrounding the athletics program.
- I will shoulder my total responsibility as a leader through athletics and will not allow that responsibility to be transferred to any person or group outside the organization. I will not violate this sacred trust for financial support or political prestige.

SECTION 17 - ADMINISTRATORS, COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS STANDARD OF CONDUCT

All Administrators, Coaches, and Volunteers will abide by a Standard of Conduct, which includes the provisions listed below. If any of these provisions are violated, the Association/Conference shall have the authority to impose any penalty they see fit. If any of these provisions are violated during a

Regional or National event, the AYF National Office at its sole discretion shall have the authority to impose any penalty it sees fit with no right to appeal. Administrators, Coaches, and Volunteers, having already accepted and agreed to abide by the Coach and Administrators Pledge and the Coach and Administrators Code, by their accepting and active participation in membership, shall follow the intent of the Pledge and Code and shall inclusively and/or additionally agree to:

1. Not smoke and/or use smokeless tobacco on the field or in front of participants at any time.
2. Abstain from the possession and drinking of alcoholic beverages and the possession or use of any illegal substance on the field or in front of participants at any time.
3. Accept decisions of the game officials and judges on the field and in competitions as being fair and called to the best of their ability.
4. Not criticize an opposing team, its players, spirit participants, coaches, or fans by word of mouth or by gesture.
5. Together with team officials, be jointly responsible for the conduct and control of team fans and spectators. Any parent, guardian or fan that becomes a nuisance and out of control must be asked to leave.
6. Not use abusive or profane language at any time.
7. Not encourage their team to intentionally run up the score on an opponent. In the event of a commanding lead every effort shall be made to let all players play.
8. Not permit or encourage, "extreme dieting," or "sweating down" tactics of any kind for any reason. Must report any instance witnessed or suspected to the parent/guardian and local administrator.
9. Not recommend or distribute any medication, controlled or over the counter.
10. Not deliberately incite unsportsmanlike conduct.
11. Not criticize/berate participants ever, to provide constructive criticism, in private, or in the presence of team/squad members if others might benefit.
12. Remove from a game or practice any participant when his/her health is in question, whether or not as a result of injury, until competent medical advice is available.
13. A coach will follow the parameters of the Anti-Substance Abuse Rule and see that it's carried out faithfully and that all players understand its importance.
14. A coach will not use ineligible players and will take the responsibility of having proper and legal documents on each and every player proving his eligibility at all times.
15. Ensure that all participants meet the minimum required number of plays under the Mandatory Play Rules and Regulations.
16. Uphold all rules and regulations of Association, Conference, Region, and National AYF.
17. A coach must discourage the wearing of gang colors or any gang symbol and the use of any gang related forms of communication during any and all team related activities including but not limited to team.
18. The act of spreading rumors, which is general talk not based on fact, will not be tolerated in American Youth Football/American Youth Cheer. It not only hurts your credibility, but affects your team/squad/association, the other team/squad/association or conference that may become involved in the rumor. In the case of cheating or rules violations, these must be reported in writing and given to the Association or Conference Official for review.

SECTION 18 - ANTI-SUBSTANCE ABUSE RULE

Each team will present a Substance Abuse lecture to players and cheerleaders at all levels of play. The lecture will be presented during the first week of practice and will be repeated as many times as necessary to ensure all American Youth participants are aware of the harmful effects of drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

A member of the coaching staff must give the lecture or an adult volunteer designated for that purpose. Some examples would be “just say no” or “DARE” programs. Also included with this talk should be topics like “Academics – Tolerance – Giving Back to the Community.”

SECTION 19 - MINIMUM PENALTIES

The following are recommended minimum penalties to be enforced for violations of, but not limited to the following rules. Organizations are encouraged to develop written guidelines for disciplinary actions to avoid criticism for selective enforcement, to provide notice to violators and to deter undesirable conduct.

Members found to be lenient on violators may be subject to probation, suspension or termination of membership.

A. Coach/Administrators

- I. Cheating: Permanent suspension. (Roster/Participant Manipulation will be considered cheating).
- II. Endangerment: Defined as any deliberate practice of a coach, team, or Association, which placed the health, welfare and safety of juveniles in jeopardy, or exploits or treats them in such a manner that the juvenile becomes a “tool” of the team.
 - First offense: suspension for one game and one week of practice.
 - Second offense: permanent suspension.
- ii. Badgering & Incitement: Badgering or threats directed at game officials and or Inciting fans to display poor sportsmanship.
 - First offense: suspension for two games and two weeks of practice.
 - Second offense: permanent suspension.
- iii. Fighting by Coaches: Fighting by coaches of any kind will not be tolerated. Guidance is that violators be subject to suspension for the remainder of the season and reported to legal authorities.
- iv. Teaching and or encouraging dirty tactics:
 - First offense: Suspension for one game and one week of practice.
 - Second offense: Permanent suspension.
- v. Falsifying birth or any other documents to make a participant eligible is grounds for forfeiture of all games in which the participant in question, participated and permanent suspension of the adult(s) responsible for the act and all evidence will be turned over to the local authorities for any criminal prosecution that may be relevant.
- vi. Playing ineligible players: Suspension for remainder of the season. League will review status for next season. Suspension may be appealed (if an appeal process exists) to the Conference depending on the nature of the ineligibility.
 - When ineligible players are found, all games of which the ineligible players participated in are forfeited and will count in the league standings as such.
 - When ineligible players are found, the entire team is ineligible for postseason play of any kind regardless of the number of losses it has suffered for playing ineligible players.
- vii. Fighting by Players:
 - First offense: Suspension for one game and one week of practice.
 - Second offense: Suspension and parental/guardian conference.

A player suspended in the Regional Finals will carry over the suspension for the first round of the AYF National Championships. If that suspended player's team receives a first game bye – the player will be suspended for the first half of that game.

viii. Disrespect for coaches, participants, and game and team officials:

- First offense: Removal from the game/practice and parental/guardian conference.
- Second offense: Suspended for one game and one week of practice.
- Third offense: Suspension and parental conference.

ix. Badgering opponents and or teammates by word or act with the purpose of intimidation:

- First offense: Removal from the game/practice and parental/guardian conference.
- Second offense: Suspended for one game and one week of practice.
- Third offense: Suspension and parental/guardian conference.

B) Organizational Offenses

In the absence of local rules and regulations regarding the following, it is AYF's recommendation that the guidelines below be implemented.

- i. Battery: Should any Player, Coach, Administrator, Parent/Guardian, or Fan should strike (hit) a game official, or member of the coaching staff, shall be subject to arrest by local law enforcement agencies, and permanent suspension including but not limited to being banned from all local and AYF events and activities.
- ii. Failure to control parents or fans: Suspension of the Association from the Conference until the administration of the Association can submit evidence satisfactory to the Conference that the problems have been rectified.
- iii. Failure to control coaches from actions contrary to the health, safety and welfare of players:
 - First offense: Probation for the entire Association for the season.
 - Second offense: Suspension of the Association from the Conference until the Association can submit satisfactory evidence to the Conference that the problems have been rectified.

SECTION 20 - HEARINGS AND APPEALS

Conferences shall have complete jurisdiction over hearings and appeals within their programs.

All hearings and appeals must be conducted in the manner the Conference has constructed in its bylaws/organizational documents. Should no process exist, it will be at the complete discretion of the Conference to allow or disallow a hearing or appeal.

The AYF National Office will not hold hearings or appeals of any kind concerning local issues.

At its sole discretion, the AYF National Office may or may not allow a hearing or appeal of any of its decisions and rulings.

See section on "Rule Enforcement Authority" for additional information.

SECTION 21 - REGIONAL/NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP ELIGIBILITY RULES AND PENALTIES

- A. Regional Committees are required to establish a system for inspecting the AYF required paperwork for all Regional Tournament teams prior to the first Regional tournament game.
- B. All paperwork must be verified to prevent a team from qualifying and traveling to the AYF National Championships when they do not legitimately qualify.
- C. In the event that a team is to be disqualified by this review the Conference runner-up would be allowed to

enter the Regional tournament.

- D.** Conferences must commit to the Region Chair the Divisions and Team Levels they will be sending to the Regional/National Tournament by **September 1**.
- E.** Regional Committees must meet to set the Tournament brackets by **October 1**.
- F.** Regional Committees must submit the tournament brackets to the AYF National Office by **October 15**. Failure to comply may result in loss of opportunity to participate in National Tournament play.
- G.** Associations that commit to their Conferences their participation in the Regional and AYF National Championships and do not compete will be subject to the commitment rule below.

POLICY REGARDING COMMITMENT/DROPS

This policy applies to ALL teams in an association where any team in that association fails to appear and to fully participate at the AYF or AYC National Championships and who desire to participate in the AYF or AYC National Championships the following year. For future years after committing to participate in the National Championships either by advancing through AYF Regionals, receiving an At Large Bid, or being granted a requested Invitational Bid to play at the AYF or AYC National Championships. Said team, in order to participate at the National Championships, must post a \$2,500.00 "commitment fee" to be paid along with the team's National Championship registration fee, in order for the team's participation and Regionals and or Nationals, to be considered. The \$2,500.00 shall be applied as follows: \$1500.00 will be applied to the applicable year's Registration Fee and \$1000.00 will be held by AYF and refunded via check at Team Check-in.

If any team does not show up at Registration, the team will forfeit the entire \$2500.00 and it will be non-refundable unless failure to show and participate is not possible or otherwise unsafe due to weather event or natural disaster, moreover;

- A.** Any team participating in the AYF National Championships and not participating in all scheduled games will cause their entire Association to be subject to suspension from the following year's post- season play.
- B.** Any team walking off the field during an AYF-sanctioned Regional or National event without the prior consent of the National Football Commissioner will be subject to suspension and subject their entire association to suspension from the following year's postseason play.
- C.** Any Team entered into postseason play of any kind must have filed a Certified Roster with the AYF National Office by the specified cutoff date
- D.** All teams must travel with a copy of the Certified Roster as well as all Participant and Tournament required paperwork. Teams must have an absentee form for any participant listed on a certified roster that does not accompany the team. All paperwork must be available for official weigh-in and player verification prior to each game. AYF Absentee Form can be found online at www.MyAYF.com.
- E.** All Teams traveling to the AYF National Championships must have with them, in addition to the above, Proof of Insurance, Background Check Affidavits and filled in AYF Mandatory Play Forms. (See MyAYF for instructions on formatting your team book so it is ready for the Regional and National tournaments) All teams traveling to the AYF National Championships must stay in approved accommodations as listed at www.ayfchampionships.com.

SPECIAL RULES REGARDING NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES

The following enumerated rules and policies are in force at the AYF national championships, this list is not all inclusive, and other rules and policies, including but not limited to those of the host venue are applicable and must be followed:

- A.** Field Etiquette = NO BULL HORNS.
- B.** Mercy Rule = 35 points or 5 touchdowns whichever comes first.

- C. In case of conflict of Jersey color the Officials will make the final decision.
- D. Penalties, Ejections, Coaches, Players at National Championship Games will be handled by the Officials and rules set forth by NFHS and AYF, all appeals will be reviewed by the Officials Administrator and the AYF National Office Administrators.
- E. Head Coaches are responsible for controlling their Staff and Fans.
- F. The Visiting Team provides the Chain Crew on the Visiting side of the field.
- G. Credentials: Certified rostered coaches (as of 10/1) will be allowed up to a maximum of 8 coaches credentials, (example: 2 (two) coaches on the certified roster 10/1, you will be allowed 2 (two) credentials).
- H. If you have a Team Mom, General Manager or Business Manager, only 1 (one) credential will be distributed no matter what the title is.
- I. MPR Monitors only 2 (two) credentials will be distributed.
- J. ALL Championship Head Coaches: Football Coaches are required to complete the “Human Kinetics AYF coaching course available at www.ayfcoaching.com. Head Coaches must present proof of this course completion at the Regional and National Championships. Certificates must be kept in the Team Book for certification purposes.

SECTION 22 - SUMMARY OF DUE DATES

August 1	Entry of one contact per team is due at www.MyAYF.com
August 25	Request for D2 and D3 Status is due to the AYF National Office.
August 31	All AYF required participant paperwork collected, completed, and inspected for compliance and roster certification.
September 1	All Teams will have registered and Paid Membership Dues at www.MyAYF.com
September 15	- Last date participants can be added/moved and certified to a roster. - Conferences must complete certification and seal all of its association rosters. - Conferences must commit teams to the regional/National Tournament to the AYF National Office.
September 19	- Rosters due to the AYF National Office by input at www.MyAYF.com. - Regions set their regional tournament brackets.
October 1	Finalize commitment of teams for the National Tournament to the AYF National Office.

SIMPLIFY YOUR SPORTS MANAGEMENT

- **More Than Just a Management Tool**

All-in-one sports solution plus more!

- **Unbeatable Value**

Subscription-free platform, including fundraising

- **Exclusive User Perks**

Discounts, insurances, athletic trainers

- **Streamlined Administration**

Registration, payments, scheduling, & more

- **Eligibility & Compliance**

Waivers, background checks, & athlete safety

- **Analysis & Reporting**

Provides financial & performance insights



LEARN MORE!



855-477-6785



INFO@ISPORTZ.CO

SECTION 23 - CONFERENCE ALL STARS

This section details participation requirements related exclusively to the American Youth Football Conference All Star Division, in connection with the AYF National Championships.

The Conference All Star Division was created to allow the older participants, those leaving youth football, the opportunity to travel and experience participation with kids from other teams they may have competed against over the years of their involvement. It will allow some better understanding and friendships to develop and give coaches from different organizations the opportunity to work together to further the objective of providing and giving back to the youth of their communities. It should be understood that while the participation is in a championship format, it is the exposure and experience being offered to the kids that is the most important feature of this effort. Winning is the result of the contest; the reward is the wisdom one will gain from this opportunity.

CONFERENCE ALL STAR – 13/14U (UNLIMITED WEIGHT):

Eligible players would be any player that is 13/14 years old or under as of 7/01 and competing in a National Tournament Conference on an AYF All American or National Division team.

CONFERENCE ALL STAR – 11U/12U (UNLIMITED WEIGHT):

Eligible players would be any player that is 11/12 years old or under as of 7/01 and competing in a National Tournament Conference or an AYF All American or National Division team.

CONFERENCE ALL STAR – 9/10U (UNLIMITED WEIGHT):

Eligible players would be any player that is 9/10 years old or under as of 7/01 and competing in a National Tournament Conference or an AYF All American or National Division team.

1. Participation commitment deadline is **September 1**. Commitments are to be made directly to the National Football Commissioner. Commitment means that each player's parent/guardian has committed and understands the financial, practice and travel obligations they are undertaking.

Associations must present a fully committed team of players and coaching staff prior to making your commitment to the AYF National Office.

Please understand plans are being made based on your commitments - other organizations are making plans or staying home based on your commitment.

2. A determination will be made by **November 1** as to the status of this Tournament Bracket.
3. You must declare, and receive approval for your uniform shirt color upon declaring your commitment to participate. Jersey colors will be accepted on a first come first serve basis with prior year's participation having priority. If your team provides players with a home and away jersey, any shirt color of your choice will be accepted.
4. Conference All Star teams will be required to pay the tournament registration fee upon commitment and acceptance into the National Tournament. This fee is non-refundable and therefore forfeited should a team back out of the tournament. In addition, any Conference that commits to sending a team to the National Tournament and does not compete will be suspended from participation for 1 year. Repeated offenses will result in longer suspensions. If less than four teams commit or legitimately qualify for

participation, all games will be played as bowl games.

5. Conference All Star teams must be made up from kids who participated on/represent at least four different associations within the Conference. No single team has more than 6 participants. You must have a system in place to establish a team with enough kids so that if a team of nominated kids were to make it into the AYF National Tournament you would still have a team and coaching staff.
6. Conferences will develop their own system for nominating and selecting coaches and players, utilizing the minimum guidelines set forth below. The coaches and players will be those not involved in postseason tournament play.

COACHING SELECTION

1. Conferences must develop their own system for All Star Coaching nomination and selection. You may want to consider developing a certificate you can use to award the coaches nominated/selected as a souvenir and recognition for their contributions to your organization.
2. All Star Coach Nominees should be coaches who have a positive history with the organization.
3. All Star Coach Nominees must be coaches who have demonstrated not only the competence one would expect from a football coach but one who demonstrates the understanding that while every game is played to win, the point of this all star event goes past the winning and losing, it is a great opportunity for the kids to experience lessons in life that will go way beyond the win or loss of the game. Therefore, the coach must have an “It’s For The Kids” attitude and demonstrate the highest of moral integrity and character as described in the National Rulebook under Section 17 Coaches; therefore, coaches who use foul language with or in front of the kids should be deemed unacceptable for appointment. Coaches must also understand that while this is a championship bracket, we will adjust where necessary to give each kid the best experience we can and help the Conference All Star program grow. We will make every effort to include all involved with any adjustments made. Any deviation from the requirements outlined in this document may result in the team being eliminated from participation or required to participate on a bowl game basis only. In other words, a team would forfeit all its games but be allowed to play with everyone’s understanding.

PLAYER SELECTION

1. Conferences must develop their own system for All Star player nomination and selection. You may want to consider developing a certificate you can use to award the players nominated and or selected as a souvenir and recognition for their contributions to your organization.
2. Conference selections must be done to ensure an even number of lineman and skill type players are ultimately selected to make up the team. Conferences are advised to request nominations from each of their member associations.
3. The player selection process should include a scholastic component. This means that the process should encourage academic achievement.
4. Conference All Star teams must be made up from kids who participated on/represent at least four different associations within the Conference with a limit on 6 kids from a single regular season team. No single Association can dominate in participation. You must have a system in place to establish a team with enough kids so that if a team of nominated kids were to make it into the AYF National Tournament you would still have a team and coaching staff. Any teams advancing to Regional/National Postseason by winning a qualifying League/ state championship that drops will result in ALL players on that team’s roster NOT being eligible for conference All Star participation.
5. Only players who, by the **September 15** deadline, were certified, listed on the final roster and actively

participated with their team during the entire regular season are eligible.

6. Players cannot play on both the conference All Star team and teams who are participating in postseason play. Therefore, you must select enough players so that you will have a team with or without the players still in post- season play. The timing of the selection and formation of the team must be determined by the Conference, understanding that you will not be allowed to start practice sooner than the first Monday after the league's last Regular Season Game has been played, no more than three practices per week, no more than three hours in duration with a mandatory 15-minute break ("Mandatory Break") after each hour of practice is required. Mandatory Breaks are not counted against the hours per week or the maximum hours per day.
7. Player nomination and selection should not only take into account a player's physical ability but should consider their contributions and adherence to the five core values attributed to the term "Athlete." Each All Star athlete should subscribe to the AYF "Circle of Giving Back" philosophy.

CONFERENCE REQUIREMENTS

1. Conferences must certify that each player nominated and selected is properly listed on the final roster and certified (submitted all of the required documentation) to their respective team by the **September 15** deadline.
2. Along with each player's documentation, Conferences are required to provide a photocopy of the roster that was submitted on the **October 1** deadline for the team they are certified to. One roster for each player even if two or more players are from the same team.
3. Conferences must ensure that each player actively participated with their team for the entire season.
4. Conferences are required to ensure that all coaches have received a background check and have been cleared by the Association they are affiliated with for their regular season participation. In addition to this requirement, the Conference must review the Association's background check documentation and complete its own review and approval process.
5. The Conference is to complete a roster for this new All Star team via the documentation provided by the AYF National Office.
6. The Conference is required to guard that the practice rules are adhered to, they are as follows: Practice may not start sooner than the first Monday in November, no more than 10 hours of practice per week, no more than three hours in duration with a mandatory 15-minute break ("Mandatory Break") after each hour of practice is required. Mandatory breaks are not counted against the hours per week or the maximum hours per day.

Note: Falsifying birth or any other documents to make a participant eligible is grounds for permanent suspension of the adult(s) and/or organization responsible for the act and all evidence will be turned over to the local authorities for any criminal prosecution that may be relevant.

New For 2026 - Conference All Star Combined Conference Parameters

7. Allow AYF conferences within the same state that border another AYF conference to compete together in the All-Star Division as a single unit. Conferences must submit all partnership parameters for National approval no later than September 1, 2026.
8. If a conference has more than 8 teams at the highest age level to choose all stars from, they will not be allowed to use the combined conference parameters to create an all star team.

SECTION 24 - ELIGIBILITY

Teams who do not conduct themselves in accordance with the requirements set forth in this section, risk their eligibility to participate in AYF regional and national tournaments. Eligibility Requirements are intended to ensure a level playing field among tournament participants. A failure to operate in accordance with the Eligibility Requirements, is seen as giving, infringes an unfair advantage against other teams, which will not be tolerated.

SECTION 25 - STATES AND REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP 6U/7U RULES

6U and 7U are National Championship Divisions. This is not Instructional Play.

The games will be played by NFHS and AYF rules with the following Special Teams modifications:

- No punts. There will be a 30 yard walk-off. (If across the 50 yard line the ball will be marked at the 20 yard line)
- No kickoffs. Ball will be placed on the 40 yard line at the beginning of each half and after scores.
- No Extra Points will be attempted via Kick

2 Point Conversion Rule:

The Game Official will ask the Coach on the Field or the Head Coach (If the team does not have a coach on the field) after

a Touchdown if he wants to attempt a 1 pt. Conversion or a 2 pt. Conversion.

1 Pt. Conversion can be attempted from the 3 yard line

2 Pt. Conversion can be attempted from the 5 yard line

Optional:

- Each team can have 1 (one) coach on the field - This is not mandatory.
- The on field coach is allowed to only call plays and not make adjustments. He may speak with his players/sidelines as long as it is related to instruction (NOT the other teams players/coaches). The Coach can Never Physically move a player.

If there are violations of this, the coach will lose the on field opportunity and be removed from the field for the remainder of the game - zero tolerance.

INFORMATIONAL SECTION ONLY – NOT A MODEL RULE

AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL NATIONAL ALL STAR GAME

This section details participation requirements related exclusively to the American Youth Football National All Star Game.

The annual AYF National All Star Game was established to allow the older participants, those leaving youth football/cheer, the opportunity to travel and experience participation with kids from other teams they may have competed against over the years of their involvement. It will allow some better understanding and friendships to develop and require coaches from different organizations the opportunity to work together to further the objective of providing and giving back to the youth of their communities. It should be understood that while the participation is a competition for the football players, it is the exposure and experience being offered to the kids that is the most important feature of this effort. Winning is the result of the contest and the reward is the wisdom one will gain from this opportunity.

The annual AYF National All Star Football teams will be made up of the oldest participants, 8th Graders. Any player may be nominated during postseason competition or not. Nominations must be made by **November 1**. Nominations must be made directly to the National Football Commissioner.

AYF ALL STAR NOMINATION GUIDELINES

COACHING & ADMINISTRATOR NOMINATIONS

1. Conferences must develop their own system for AYF All Star Coaching & Administrator nominations and submit directly to the National Football Commissioner.
2. Nominations must be made by **November 1** and/or selections will be made at the discretion of the AYF National Office.
3. AYF All Star Coach Nominees should be coaches who have a positive history with the organization. Each conference's cooperation in communicating with the AYF National Office and 100% participation as a tournament member will weigh heavily into coaching selections.
4. AYF All Star Administrator Nominees should be Administrators who have a positive history with the organization.
5. AYF All Star Coach Nominees must be coaches who have demonstrated not only the competence one would expect from a football/cheer coach but one who demonstrates the understanding that while every game is played to win, the point of this all star event goes past the winning and losing, it is a great opportunity for the kids to experience lessons in life that will go way beyond the win or loss of the game. Therefore, the coach must have an "It's for the Kids" attitude and demonstrate the highest of moral integrity and character as described in the National Rulebook.
6. Coaching selection/appointments are at the complete discretion of the AYF National Office. Whenever possible Head Coaches will be selected from the previous seasons Assistant Coaches. Head Coaches can and may be re-appointed more than once.
7. Administrator nominations, follow all guidelines above, should be reserved for Administrators who understand the difficulty in organizing all of the required paperwork, and should be administrators deserving of prominent recognition.
8. Coach and Administrator nomination forms will be sent to each conference president (or his/her appointed representative) for completion.

PLAYER NOMINATIONS

1. Conferences must develop their own system for All Star player/cheerleader nominations and submit directly to the National Football Commissioner.
2. Nominations must be made by **November 1**.
3. Player nomination forms will be sent to each conference president (or his/her appointed representative) for completion.
4. Football - Nominations must be done to ensure lineman and skill type players are ultimately nominated from each conference.
5. Football - A maximum of ten (10) players can be nominated from each conference, nominations do not guarantee any of the players will ultimately be selected. Each conference's cooperation in communicating with the AYF National Office and 100% participation as a tournament member will weigh heavily into player selections.
6. The player nomination process must include a scholastic component. This means that the process should encourage academic achievement.
7. Player nominations should be reserved for the player that will no longer have the eligibility to play with the youth league. Participants must be eighth grade.
8. Only players who, by the **September 15** deadline, were certified, listed on the final roster and actively participated with their team during the entire regular season are eligible.
9. Player nominations and selection should not only take into account physical abilities but should consider the contributions and adherence to the five core values attributed to the term "Athlete", and should understand the AYF "Circle of Giving Back" philosophy.

ASSOCIATION/TEAM CONFERENCE REQUIREMENTS

1. Conferences must certify that each player nominated and selected were properly listed on the final roster and certified (submitted all of the required documentation) to their respective team by the **September 15** deadline.
2. Association/Teams are required to provide each player/cheerleader's documentation, a photocopy of the roster they were certified to, and that was submitted by the **October 1** deadline. Documentation is required for each player/cheerleader, even if two (2) or more players/cheerleaders are from the same team.
3. Association/Teams are required to ensure that each participant fills out the required additional event paperwork and submit to the AYF National All Star Team Administrator.
4. Conferences are required to ensure that all coaches have received a background check and have been cleared by the Association they are affiliated with as required for their regular season participation. The Conference must review the Association's background check documentation and complete its own review and approval process.

Note: Falsifying birth or any other documents to make a participant eligible is grounds for permanent suspension of the adult(s) and or organization responsible for the act and all evidence will be turned over to the local authorities for any criminal prosecution that may be relevant.



schutt | VICIS

PREFERRED PARTNER PRICING

25% Off Manufacturers Advertised Price
(as shown on schuttsports.com and vicis.com)

AYF Members enjoy **exclusive pricing** on Schutt and VICIS youth helmets, shoulder pads and reconditioning through three easy options.

3 WAYS TO ORDER

FOR INDIVIDUAL PURCHASES

- **THROUGH OUR WEBSITES:**
schuttsports.com / vicis.com
Use AYF discount code: **AYF25**

FOR TEAM PURCHASES

- **THROUGH YOUR LOCAL TEAM DEALER:**
Present AYF membership certificate at time of order to get discount.
- **THROUGH OUR AYF DIRECT TEAM SALES DEPT:**
Contact via email for quote and ordering
AYF@certorsports.com

APPENDIX 1

These materials are presented by Sadler Insurance. The purpose of this article is not to suggest exactly which policies should be implemented in your local youth football league, instead it is to provide an educational awareness of some of the critical factors that have led to deaths and resulting litigation and to provide links to authority resources for more information. Primary emphasis will concentrate on prevention and response to exertional heat stroke.

Exertional Heat Stroke In Youth Football Is 100% Preventable

One of our youth football insurance clients recently had an unfortunate death claim caused by exertional heat stroke. The General Liability carrier settled the case at the policy limits of \$1,000,000. We wanted to share some of the lessons learned so that our insurance clients and the youth football community at large can prevent this terrible event from repeating.

What Organization Sets The Standard Of Care For Heat Illness: NFHS, NATA, KSI?

Exertional heat stroke is a serious condition and one of the leading causes of death during the preseason in youth tackle football. And according to experts, it is 100% preventable if the correct guidelines are adopted and implemented. But what are the correct standards of care and what organization sets these standards? The answer to this question is complicated and very much up in the air. The correct answer is whatever a court says the standard of care is in a particular state.

Defense attorneys will argue that absent specific legislation, youth football volunteers are held to a lower standard of care than school employees but generally should comply with their state's version of [National Federation of State High School Associations](#) (NFHS) guidelines. However, plaintiffs attorneys will argue that the standard of care is the more aggressive policies published by the [National Athletic Trainers' Association](#) (NATA) and the [Korey Stringer Institute](#) (KSI). Many state high school athletic associations have adopted many of the more stringent NATA position statements including NJ and TX and KSI policies including CT, NC, and GA. [KSI ranks the various state high school associations](#) compliance with their policies.

Flexibility is required when setting policies because each region of the country and state has different climates and each local organization has different resources. Regardless, youth tackle football organizations should at a minimum meet the policies or guidelines set by their state's version of NFHS and should strive to meet the higher policies set by KSI if at all feasible.

Heat Syncope, Heat Cramps And Heat Exhaustion: Recognition, Causes, Treatment, And Prevention

Heat Syncope - Fainting or lightheadedness episode due to blood pooling in lower extremities and reducing the heart's ability to provide enough circulation. Heat syncope is usually caused by lack of heat acclimatization and poor conditioning. Treatment entails moving the athlete inside or into the shade and lying that athlete on the ground and raising their legs 12 inches. This assists with returning more blood to the heart to normalize blood pressure. Full recovery usually occurs within hours and return to activity can resume when athlete is re-hydrated and feels better.

Heat Cramps - Painful muscle spasms, usually involving the calves that are primarily caused by fatigue, dehydration, and loss of electrolytes through sweating. Treatment should consist of gentle stretching, ice applied to muscle, increased water and electrolyte consumption, and rest. Heat cramps can be prevented by proper hydration prior to, during, and after practice and by heat acclimatization. Athlete can return to play once cramps resolve.

Heat Exhaustion - The inability to continue to exercise in the heat from either weakness or exhaustion. Signs and symptoms are fatigue, dizziness, chills, and rapid pulse. Heat exhaustion is caused by excessive fluid or electrolyte losses. Treatment includes moving athlete from hot environment to air conditioned room or shade, lying the athlete on the ground and raising legs by 12 inches, re-hydration, and by cooling with ice towels, misting fan, or cold water

immersion. Recurrences can be prevented by proper hydration prior to, during, and after practice and by heat acclimatization. The athlete should not return to activity on the same day and recovery takes 24-48 hours.

Recognizing Early Signs And Serious Signs Of Exertional Heat Stroke - 70% Of Parents Can't Identify These

Early Signs And Symptoms of Heat Stroke - Headaches, dizziness, and nausea/vomiting with a rectal temperature of 104 degrees or less. Treatment includes immediately moving the athlete from a hot environment to air conditioned room or shade, lying the athlete on the ground and raising legs by 12 inches, re-hydration, and by cooling with ice towels, misting fan, or cold water immersion. Recurrences can be prevented by proper hydration prior to, during, and after practice and by heat acclimatization. The athlete should not return to practice without a written release from a medical doctor.

Serious Signs And Symptoms of Heat Stroke - Central nervous system dysfunction such as clumsiness, stumbling, collapse, loss of consciousness, confusion, mood changes, aggressiveness, disorientation, seizure, coma, etc. and a rectal temperature of greater than 104 degrees. Athletes exhibiting these signs and symptoms should be considered to be suffering from exertional heat stroke and must be treated immediately to prevent major organ damage or death. Athletes should undergo a gradual return to play protocol under the supervision of a doctor and should not return to play without a written release signed by a medical doctor. Any predisposing factors should also be identified and remedied prior to return to play.

The public has been incorrectly taught in the past by authorities that athletes stop sweating during heat stroke and the athlete exhibits hot, dry skin. However, this is not the case and the athlete is usually sweating at the time of collapse. Don't let this misconception prevent the diagnosis and prompt response to heat stroke.

In Event Exertional Heat Stroke Is Suspected - Cool First And Transport Second

Simultaneously Call EMS And Start Rapid Cooling On Site - Rapid cooling involves planning prior to the emergency so that necessary equipment and supplies are instantly available. Ice water baths are the preferred cooling technique and immersion tubs, water source, and ice must be available with staff trained on rapid set up. It is not necessary to use an expensive tub as a Rubbermaid container of sufficient size or wading pool will work.

If an ice water bath is not available, then apply ice packs to the neck, arm pits, and groin and rotate ice water soaked towels to all other parts of the body.

In addition, a rectal thermistor (thermometer attached to a long flexible cord) is needed to properly measure rectal temperature during cold water immersion. If you don't have a rectal thermistor, but heat stroke is suspected based on the signs and symptoms, you should never delay immediate rapid cooling. For more detailed information, see [How To Respond To An](#)

[Exertional Heat Stroke Emergency.](#)

Transportation To Hospital By EMS - Sports organizations should have a facility specific written Emergency Action Plan for coordination, access, and evacuation by EMS which includes a site map.

Immediate Whole Body Ice Immersion Has A 100% Survival Rate

According to NATA research, exertional heat stroke has a 100% survival rate when immediate cooling via cold water immersion or whole body dousing is started within 10 minutes of collapse. According to KSI, an athlete with exertional heat stroke should be cooled to 102 F within 30 minutes. Many individuals will start with temperatures of 106 - 110 F and will cool at the rate of 1 degree for every three minutes. Cooling can take up to 20 minutes. For more details on how to properly set up cooling tubs for ice water immersion see [Ice Water Immersion Best For Treating Heat Stroke](#) and [Practical Guidelines For Implementing Cold Water Immersion For An Exertional Heat Stroke Patient](#).

Fundamentals Of Preventing Heat Illness

Education

All organizations should consider mandatory training for all coaches and assistant coaches through the free online training resource offered through NFHS entitled [A Guide To Heat Acclimatization And Heat Illness](#)

Prevention which introduces 7 fundamentals which if followed will minimize heat related illnesses including exertional heat stroke.

Pre Season Physical Or Medical Clearance

All athletes participating in youth tackle football should be required to provide written evidence of either a preseason physical or medical clearance form signed by a licensed healthcare professional releasing the athlete for play without restrictions. Medical examinations can uncover preexisting conditions that could predispose an athlete to serious injury arising from participation.

Heat Acclimatization

The majority of heat related deaths occur during the first five days of practice as an athlete adjusts to being exposed to high heat levels with intense exercise while wearing heat retaining equipment. Heat acclimatization is a series of physiological adaptations that allows the body to adapt to exercise in heat and occurs over a period of 10 - 14 days. These adaptations include the ability to maintain lower body temperatures, a lower heart rate, more efficient heart / function blood distribution, faster and increased sweating, the ability for the body to store more water, and decreased salt losses in sweat and urine.

Factors to take into account include:

- *Start with shorter, less intense practices with longer rest breaks between intense exercise periods.
- *Minimize the use of heat retaining protective gear such as helmets, shoulder pads, and pants during the first few practices and introduce them progressively over successive days. An example would be helmets only during first two days, helmets and shoulder pads only on days 3-5, and full pads on day 6.
- *Progressively introduce contact. An example would be no contact on days 1-2, contact with dummies and blocking sleds on days 3-5, full contact on day 6, and 3 full days of contact before first scrimmage.
- *Only one practice per day in youth football.
- *Limit practice time to two hours in youth football which includes warm up, stretching, cool down, walk through, and conditioning.
- *Emphasize instruction over conditioning during the first few days of preseason practice.
- *Athletes must begin practice fully hydrated and must continue to hydrate with frequent water or sports drink breaks throughout practice.
- *Keep in mind that athletes begin the season with varying levels of fitness and special accommodations must take into account those who are unfit, obese, recent illness, previous history of heat illness, and sickle cell trait. Practice must be modified for these individuals.

Modify Practice For Environmental Conditions: Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) vs Heat Index

Practice modification is required during periods of extreme environmental temperatures that

increase the chances of heat illness. The modifications may include limiting total practice time, scheduling practice early or late in the day, decreased intensity, increased work to rest ratios, more frequent hydration and rest breaks, closer monitoring of athlete stress levels, elimination of heat retaining equipment, unlimited access to hydration, and cancellation.

WGBT has become the new standard for measuring the impact of environmental temperature on athletics. WGBT is a composite temperature that takes into account air temperature, humidity, and solar radiation on the human body. On the other hand, **Heat Index** merely reflects the combination of heat and humidity and "how it feels" on a person who is normally dressed and not involved in strenuous activity. The WGBT should be taken before practice and during practice at intervals if the temperature is rising.

The cost of WGBT meters have been falling and currently range in price from \$114 to \$479 depending on the features provided. If a WGBT meter is not available, the next best measure is use the Heat Index with a **Heat Index Activity Guideline Chart**.

WGBT Activity Guidelines And Rest Break Guidelines

Under 82.0 Normal Activities - Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 minutes each during the workout.

82.0 - 86.9 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 - 89.0 Maximum practice time is 2 hours. **For Football:** 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. For all Sports: Provide at least four separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 minutes each.

90.0 - 92.0 Maximum practice time is 1 hour. **For Football:** no protective equipment may be worn during practice, and there may be no conditioning activities. For All Sports: There must be 20 minutes of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice.

Over 92.0 No outdoor workouts. Delay practice until a cooler WBGT level is reached.

Source: Georgia High School Association. These guidelines were created in GA and assume that athletes from GA are used to higher temperatures. For this reason, the activity guidelines should be altered based on other regions. Athletes residing in the N.E. part of the country are accustomed to cooler temperatures as compared to those in the S.E. or Midwest.

Hydration

While proper hydration will not prevent heat illness, it will decrease the risk as it reduces large increases in core body temperature during intense exercise in the heat. Fluid replacement needs may vary depending on each athlete's sweat rate.

Weight loss during exercise in the heat can negatively impact heat tolerance. A loss of just 3% or more during exercise can significantly increase the risk for heat stroke. The following factors predispose athletes to a higher risk of dehydration: high body fat percentages, salty sweaters, and recent illnesses such as fever or gastrointestinal distress.

An athlete's urine volume and color should be regular and light colored or nearly clear. Small amounts of dark urine indicate dehydration. **See urine color chart.**

When Should Athletes Hydrate?

Before exercise: Drink 16 ounces of water or sports drink 2 hours before physical activity. Drink another 8 to 16 ounces 15 minutes prior to physical activity.

During exercise: Drink as much as they want with unlimited supply and no restrictions. But some athletes can't rely on thirst as an accurate gauge. As a rule of thumb, drink 4 to 8 ounces of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes (some athletes who have a greater than average sweat rate may

need to consume more liquids).

After exercise: Drink enough to replace any weight loss from exercise. As a rule of thumb, drink 16 to 20 ounces of fluid for every pound lost.

What Are The Best Types Of Drinks?

Water should be the main fluid available during exercise. However, sports drinks with an appropriate carbohydrate and sodium formulation should may provide additional benefit in the following situations:

- *Intense exercise with a duration greater than 60 minutes.
- *Poor hydration prior to activity.
- *Poor acclimatization prior to participation.
- *A high sweat rate or salty sweaters.
- *Athletes who don't like the taste of water

What Not To Drink

A sports drink or fruit juices with a carbohydrate formulation greater than 6%-8% will slow stomach emptying.

The appropriate sodium content in sports drinks is .4-1.2 grams per liter to assist with fluid retention. Avoid concentrations above this range.

Energy drinks with stimulants such as caffeine and/or ephedrine.

Emergency Action Plans

All sports organizations should have a written Emergency Action Plan (EAP) in order to respond quickly and appropriately to catastrophic injuries. All health care providers, trainers, administrators, and coaches need to be aware and knowledgeable of its contents. A well-structured EAP plan will incorporate the following elements:

- *Written documentation that is readily accessible such as on sports organization websites.
- *Should describe the organization's emergency personnel involved and the role of each person.
- *Emergency equipment and supplies such as cool immersion tub, AEDs, rectal thermistor, first aid kit, water source, ice, etc.
- *Best way to call EMS.
- *Venue directions and emergency access map on website.
- *Periodic training and practice of emergency personnel.

Resources

[Position Statement and Recommendations For Maintaining Hydration To Optimize Performance And Minimize The Risk For Exertional Heat Illness](#); NFHS; Sports Medicine Advisory Committee; 2014

[Dangers of Heat Illness Reduced by Following Proper Guidelines](#); NFHS; David Csillan; May 15, 2017

[USA Football Heads Up: Heat & Hydration](#)

[Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention Position Statement](#); NFHS; Sports Medicine Advisory Committee; April 2012.

[The Heat Factor: Drew Brees Wants You To Know About EHS](#)

[Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention - For Safety and Performance](#); Michael F. Bergeron; National Youth Sports Health & Safety Institute

[Georgia State High School Association Practice Policy for Heat And](#)

[Humidity](#) [Korey Stinger Institute](#)

[National Athletic Trainers' Association](#)

DISCLAIMER: THIS BULLETIN ON HEAT ILLNESS RISK MANAGEMENT IS MEANT TO PROVIDE GENERAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ON THE TOPIC COMPILED FROM VARIOUS RESOURCES AND IS NO WAY IS MEANT TO PROVIDE STANDARDS OR POLICIES TO BE

IMPLEMENTED BY SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS. THIS BULLETIN MAY CONTAIN INCORRECT INFORMATION AND MAY OMIT CRITICAL INFORMATION. SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD IMPLEMENT THE POLICIES SUGGESTED BY THE VARIOUS AUTHORITY SOURCES SUCH AS NFHS, NATA, AND KOREY STRINGER INSTITUTE. SADLER & COMPANY, INC. DISCLAIMS ANY AND ALL LIABILITY RESULTING FROM THE PUBLICATION OF THIS AWARENESS AND EDUCATIONAL BULLETIN. IN EXCHANGE FOR RECEIPT OF THIS INFORMATION, RECIPIENT AGREES TO HOLD HARMLESS AND INDEMNIFY SADLER & COMPANY, INC. AND RESPECTIVE DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, AND EMPLOYEES FOR ANY CLAIMS OF BODILY INJURY, PROPERTY DAMAGE, OR OTHER DAMAGES, INCLUDING REASONABLE ATTORNEY'S FEES, TO THEMSELVES OR THIRD PARTIES.