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Helpful Information for Start Up Youth Football Organizations:

When starting a youth football program here are a few very important things to keep in mind:

Safety is always first:

The best way to ensure safety is by purchasing reliable equipment from a well known equipment provider (i.e. Adams USA, Schutt Sports, Bike, Etc.) and properly fitting your player's equipment before participation in live action is allowed. Your organization is solely responsible for ensuring that your players are provided with safe & reliable equipment. One way to ensure that each player has the same quality of equipment is to provide each player only the standard equipment type that your organization has decided to use. For instance, if you've decided to go with a certain helmet and/or shoulder pad then make it a requirement that each player is issued this standard equipment by your organization. One of the pitfalls of a lot of organizations is that some players may claim to have their own equipment that they want to use. This is a big No-No for the following reason:

- Football equipment needs to be inspected every so often to ensure it is safe for use. If players bring in their own equipment then your organization has no way of ensuring that their equipment meets your safety standards and guidelines. By controlling the equipment being used, your organization will be able to ensure that all of the equipment is safe and adequate for competition.

Your organization should routinely have your equipment inspected and reconditioned (when necessary) every 3 to 4 years.

Team Make Ups:

Teams that participate in youth football are typically organized by weight & size. The weight and sizes of your teams will play a large part in determining your equipment needs. All reputable manufacturers provide sizing charts typically based on weight & size ranges that can guide you when making your equipment decisions. For instance, if you have a team that has a weight limit of 75 lbs you may typically want to order equipment designated for kids in the 60 to 80lb range. There may be a few exceptions where some kids are smaller than average but the majority of your kids will require equipment for this range. Remember that this year's team will be different from next year's team so you need to have a supply of equipment that will cover at least 90% of your incoming kids each season.

Appearance Speaks Volumes:

One of the biggest attractors of kids to a program, believe it or not, is the appearance of your teams. This holds true from practice to game day attire. One way to ensure that your teams always have a positive appearance is by embracing uniformity. Even if your team's equipment or apparel is not the most expensive, it should at least be the same for all of your kids. Some of the most common comments you overhear at a youth sporting event is that, "why don't their helmets all match", or "some of their jerseys are different from the others" or "why do some of them have names on the back and the others don't". Believe it or not these are the types of things that may make kids not want to play for your team. However, when all of your players are dressed the same it makes your team and organization appear more professional and unified.

Registration 101

Make sure that all forms are in order to run a smooth registration process

As the time for player registration in fall youth football leagues draws near, league administrators should have the necessary forms ready to go.

Making sure that enough volunteers are available in the next few months to process the paperwork and help with potential problems is also a top priority.

With youth football leagues growing in size all across the nation, many leagues are starting player registration as early as mid-March. Rather than waiting until the start of the season, beginning early ensures ample time to process paperwork.

Checklist of registration forms to be signed by parents and/or players:

1. **Player Registration Form** - includes player contact information, age, weight, special medical conditions, emergency contacts, experience level, and pre-arranged absences (to be signed by parent and player).
2. **Parental Consent Form** - gives the player parental permission to participate in football, verifies that the player is in healthy condition, and asks for volunteers (to be signed by parent).
3. **Codes of Conduct** - explains to players and parents what is appropriate behavior and what will not be tolerated by the league (to be signed by parent and player).

Checklist of information to be distributed at registration:

1. **Age-Weight Schematic** - inform parents and players of the league age-weight classifications.
2. **Driving Directions** - distribute driving directions to both practice and game fields.
3. **Coach Contact Info** - give parents and players the information and contact numbers for their coach.
4. **Calendar/Schedule** - supply parents and players with a calendar that includes game schedules, events, and other important dates.
5. **League Information** - detail on paper for parents and players, what the league expects from them and what they can expect from the league. Include league contact information to be used throughout the season.
6. **Participation Requirements** - inform parents and players of any requirements for play.
7. **List of Clinics** - provide parents and players with a list of skills clinics they can participate in before the season begins.

Youth Football Registration Tips

As youth football leagues grow in size, structured registration is more and more important

With youth football leagues growing in size all across the nation, many leagues are starting player registration as early as mid-March.

Rather than waiting until the start of the season, beginning early ensures ample time to get paper work completed.

Here are some tips to help with your registration planning including a timeline, forms/information checklists and general advice.

Registration Planning Timeline
Forms Checklist
Information Checklist
Additional Tips & Advice

Registration Planning Timeline:

A good time to begin the planning process for registration is January.

Plan to have registration run the first three weeks of June.

Enlist several staff members or volunteers to help at the registration site.

Make decisions regarding the cost and dates of registration.

Arrange to have registration occur while school is in session because the players will be around and are much harder to reach once summer starts and families take vacations.

Request the permit to use a school, recreation center, or local community center for on-site registration.

Permit requests usually need to be in by January.

Prepare incentives for registrants whereby you base pricing on early bird, regular, and late registration.

Set flexible times for registration on the weekends keeping in mind that many registrants participate in other sports.

Begin registration around 9am and go until 2pm or 3pm.

Forms Checklist:

Player registration form - includes player contact information, age, weight, special medical conditions, emergency contacts, experience level, and pre-arranged absences.

Parental consent form - gives the player parental permission to participate in football, verifies that the player is in healthy condition, and asks for volunteers.

Codes of conduct - explains to players and parents what is appropriate behavior and what will not be tolerated by the league.

Information Checklist:

Age-weight schematic - This informs parents and players of the league age-weight classifications.

Driving directions - Distribute driving directions to both practice and game fields.

Coach contact info - Give parents and players the information and contact numbers for their coach.

Calendar/schedule - Supply parents and players with a calendar that includes events, important dates, and game schedules.

League information - Detail on paper for parents and players, what the league expects from them and what they can expect from the league. Include league contact information to be used throughout the season.

Participation requirements - Inform parents and players of any requirements for play.

List of clinics - Provide parents and players with a list of clinics they can participate in before the season begins.

Additional Tips & Advice:

Communication - Request an email address from parents on the main registration form. Email is the best way for mass communication regarding game schedules, cancellations, and other important pieces of information to be relayed during the season.

Volunteers - Target areas where volunteer help is needed on the main forms to try and grab parent volunteers.

Date of birth - Confirming the date of birth can be difficult if parents aren't able to locate birth certificates. Many states offer an alternative to that proof of age is asking registrants to get picture ID cards from the Department of Motor Vehicles. These ID cards are generally good for five years and are hardest to falsify.

Weight classification - At the time of registration, players write their weight on the main registration form. A few months later when the season begins, chances are the player's weight

may have changed. To get an accurate weight in order to place players on the proper team, have a weigh-in at the first practice and reshuffle teams as needed.

Physicals - A common problem that arises during registration is players having outdated physicals older than one year. Prior to each season, players should be required to verify their physical health.

Youth Football Registration Pitfalls

Be aware of potential problems that can arise during youth football registration

Registration for youth football leagues usually begins in the spring or early summer.

While youth football league administrators may have forms and information in order, there are a few common roadblocks to be aware of.

The most universal problems concern current physicals, weight, and identification. Many leagues require participants to undergo a complete physical before the start of each season. Problems can arise because of differentiations between school requirements and youth football league requirements.

"Often times, players get their physicals in the fall preceding the season and school year," said Heyward Prude, III, President of the EMS Rams, a youth football team in Cleveland, Ohio. But, the physical doesn't carry over to the next season because our league cannot accept a physical that is more than six months old."

In most schools, physicals are valid for up to one year, but when registration rolls around in the spring, the physical might already be six months old and will expire before the fall play begins.

To combat this problem, league administrators need to communicate with parents of current or prospective players during the off-season about keeping their physicals current.

In cases when a player registers with out of date physicals, getting an appointment for a new physical at the last minute can be difficult. Another issue comes up when physicians won't administer another physical because one had been done recently. It then becomes difficult for players to get a physical at the last minute from someone other than their own physician.

"Our league has fostered a relationship with local hospitals in Cleveland so that kids can get physicals from them," said Prude. This relationship gives players and parents another option to complete a physical.

Birth certificates are another big issue. In order to prove that the player is in a certain age group, leagues require their birth certificate to be presented as evidence of their age. Unfortunately, birth certificates are often misplaced. Advertising for registration in advance can inform parents ahead of time to start looking for their son or daughter's birth certificate.

Equipment Guidelines

From the USA Football League Operating Guide, keep in mind that you will need to furnish at least some standard equipment for your players in your new league. Read more to see a full list of possible equipment needs.

Now that your new youth football league is up and running, it's time to determine what kind of equipment your players will need.

The physical contact in football demands that each player wear a full complement of protective equipment. Most youth football leagues require equipment used during play to meet the standards of the National Federation of State High School Association ([NFHS](#)) and the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment ([NOCSAE](#)).

Additionally, it is recommended that no jewelry of any kind including, but not limited to, necklaces, ear rings and bracelets and watches be worn during competition (including games, practices and scrimmages). Medical alert bracelets or necklaces are permitted but must be taped to the person and considered a danger during games or practice. Moreover, no head coverings with any type of knots in them are permitted. It is highly recommended that a player be removed from the game for wearing illegal, altered or modified equipment and not allowed to return until the condition is corrected. USA Football recommends not allowing youth players to wear face shields in practices or in games, unless the player receives a written physician's request. If face shields are allowed to be worn, USA Football advises only clear shields that are of a "snap on nature" can be used.

To ensure safety, USA Football suggests that each league incorporate a policy regarding privately owned equipment.

All shoulder, hip, kidney, tailbone, thigh and knee pads shall meet the standards of the NFHS and the NOCSAE and shall not be altered by players or team staff in any way.

At a minimum, USA Football recommends the following equipment to be worn:

Helmet

The helmet is typically the most recognizable piece of all sport's equipment. It protects various parts of the head from collisions with other players and the ground. The chin strap will be standard equipment for all helmets. There are different types of helmets including their padding structure. One must follow the manufacturer's guidelines to ensure proper fitting. Additionally, an authorized NOCSOE inspection company must inspect all helmets, at least once every four (4) years. Only helmets with the NOSCAE Seal of Certification shall be worn.

Having a proper fitting helmet is essential for youth players; therefore, each youth league must take the proper steps to train equipment mangers and coaches how to fit a helmet properly.

Furthermore, it is recommended that each league monitor and establish policies and guidelines regarding all helmet decals or team/sponsor names on helmets and the type of paint used by teams/individuals to paint their helmets. USA Football recommends that all painting, decals, emblems, etc. be approved in writing by your youth football league.

Face Mask

The role of the face mask is to shield the face from contact and collisions. Most importantly, it protects the nose. There are many styles of the face mask, depending on position, which provide the player with several options.

Shoulder Pads

These pads tend to take the most abuse during the course of the game. Shoulder pads are extremely important because they cushion the impact a player makes with other players and the ground. Shoulder pads protect the shoulders, chest, and back.

Girdle and Hip Pads

These pads are probably the smallest pads required for competition. The hip and tailbone pad protect both respective areas. They are made of foam and are held in check by the girdle. Care must be taken to guard the exposed edge of the hip bone, the base of the spine and the kidney area. Pads must be either worn in girdle or attached to a belt or pants.

Thigh Guards/Pads

The thigh pads are the biggest leg pads and are worn underneath the pants. They protect the quadriceps muscles from collisions with other players and the ground. There are many different sizes for players at different positions. Kickers and punters generally wear the smallest size pads because those positions receive the least amount of contact.

Knee Pads

Knee pads protect the knees, fit inside the lower part of the pants and are constructed of shock absorbing material.

Mouth Piece

The mouth piece is fitted and should be inserted into the mouth prior to any live play in practice and a game. The mouth piece does protect players' teeth but even more importantly, it protects from concussions resulting from blows to the head. It can be either attached or unattached to the helmet. It is recommended that a mouth piece is a "keeper strap" variety. This "keeper strap" enables the mouth piece to be safely secured to the face mask.

Pants

Pants may be of one-piece or "shell" construction. One piece pants feature removable (snap-out) hip and kidney pads; knit (cotton/nylon) material is suggested with tunnel belts loops or attached web belt. "Shell" pants typically feature knee guard and waist-suspended thigh guard pockets.

Athletic Supporter

An athletic supporter, also called a jock strap, provides support and lift for sports or activities requiring a support. It is an elastic support with a pouch for supporting and protecting the male genitals, while participating in athletics. Supporters also have an optional soft cup.

Sizing Up Helmets

How to properly fit football helmets on your young players.

As a coach or parent, ensuring the safety of your players while they are on the football field is your most important concern. That said, knowing how to properly fit your player with the right equipment makes your team that much safer.

And in today's environment, a coach must be proficient at more than organizing practices and teaching skills. You must be able to properly fit helmets and shoulder pads on your young players. Their safety and well-being depends on it. Let's take a look at how to go about preparing youngsters for a day of football fun.

Helmets

Proper fitting is the key to head protection and player comfort. The goal is a customized fit for

every player. A helmet that doesn't fit can contribute to head injuries. The helmet should always move as the head moves, and should not move independently of the head.

1. Instruct players on the dangers of using the helmet incorrectly, and the importance of using proper blocking/tackling techniques.
2. Before fitting, note any irregularities of the head, which may require a fitting adjustment. Two players with the same sized heads may have two completely different-shaped heads.
3. Measure a player's head with helmet tape to determine proper shell size. Do this about 1 inch above the eyebrow. Wetting the player's head makes the initial fit easier.
4. Tighten the chinstrap so that the cup is snug and centered on the chin. Do not allow your players to play with unsnapped chinstraps. This can cause the helmet to pop off on contact.
5. Be sure the player's ear openings are centered with the helmet's ear openings.
6. Check to see that the eyebrows are 1 to 1 1/2 inches below the helmet's edge.
7. Make sure the jaw pads follow the contours of the cheek. It's very common for young players to have very narrow faces. You may have to adjust the thickness of the jaw pads to get a better fit.
8. Try to rotate the helmet side to side. Forehead skin or hair should move with the helmet, but it should not slip.
9. Check to see that the faceguard is 2 to 2 1/2 finger widths from the tip of the nose.
10. Check vision, both peripherally as well as up and down. He should be able to see peripherally to about 180 degrees and up and down to about 75 degrees.

Sizing Up Shoulder Pads

How to properly fit shoulder pads on your young players

The first day of practice can make any youth football coach anxious, yet eager, to get started. But one must not forget that safety is the most important thing to remember when coaching or simply observing a sport such as football.

The first step in ensuring a safe environment is proper equipment. And in today's environment, a coach must be proficient at more than just organizing practices and teaching skills. A coach must be able to properly fit helmets and shoulder pads on your young players. Their safety and well-being depends on it. Let's take a look at how to go about preparing youngsters for a day of football fun.

Shoulder Pads

The basic function of a shoulder pad is to protect the player's shoulder, back, and chest. You will encounter more of a variety of body types and shapes when fitting shoulder pads. Most youth pads are designed as all-purpose pads.

1. Determine the proper size pad. There are several ways to do this:
 - o Shoulder width — Have the player extend his arms straight out to the side at shoulder level to form a "T." Measure from the indentation where the deltoid and trapezius muscles meet on one side to the same point on the other side.
 - o Chest measurement — Using a tape measure, measure around the chest line of the athlete as he takes a normal breath and holds it.
 - o Weight measurement — This is the most commonly used method with youth players. Figure out his weight and convert to a chest size.
2. Check to see that laces are centered, snug and tightly tied.
3. Make sure the straps underneath the shoulder pad are snug with all the slack taken out.
4. Check to see that the caps on the outside of the shoulder pad extend one-third to halfway down the arm.

5. Look to see that the shell padding extends three-fourths to 1 inch beyond the AC joint when the arms are at the athlete's side.
6. Check to see that the area formed by the union of the sternum and the arches cover the clavicle.
7. Check to see that there is a 2- to 3-inch space between the shell padding and the neck.
8. Look to see that the arches adequately cover the pectoral area.
9. Check to see that the athlete has adequate range of motion; he should be able to raise and lower his arms without the pad riding up into the neck opening.
10. Finally, have the athlete put his helmet and jersey on and assume his stance to make sure you haven't overlooked anything.

Fast Fundraising

5 Ways to Boost Your Bottom Line

Nearly all sports teams require fundraising at one point or another. Maybe your league needs new uniforms.

Or maybe it's time to replace old equipment (helmet manufacturers recommend reconditioning or replacing helmets at least every five years!).

Or perhaps the entire team wants to go to football camp. Or you just made the regional playoffs and the cost of the trip is causing sticker shock.

The more you need, the more work you'll have to do to raise those funds with multiple fundraisers throughout the season. But don't burn out your volunteers and players. Here's how you can increase your bottom line with each fundraiser.

1. Power Up With An Overlay

Not everyone is going to want the fundraising products you are selling, no matter how great they are. You can add as much as 50 percent to your fundraising results with a secondary product or "overlay."

People like choices. Just don't make it confusing or a product that competes with one of your other fundraising items.

If you're selling candy or cookie dough, for example, you can also offer a discount card for pizza, or a two-for-one deal at a popular fast food chain. Most discount cards are heavy on the profit and appeal to a wider range of supporters.

Discount cards are most often valid for one year, allowing you to offer the same or a similar card for next year's fundraiser overlay. Discount cards from national fast food or pizza chains will have the most appeal. People can use them on vacation, or buy extras for family and friends.

Whatever overlays you use, make sure your alternate choices are straightforward and easy to explain to supporters. One or two sentences should say it all. Always lead with your primary items, but be sure to offer the overlay items whether they make an initial purchase or not.

Example: "If the candy doesn't appeal to you, we've got a great discount card. You get a free pizza with every one you buy at Pizza Palace!"

By broadening your appeal you can maximize your bottom line.

2. Take It Easy

Go where the people are—shopping centers! It's what fighter pilots refer to as a "target-rich environment."

Your players can reach dozens of qualified prospects each hour. Why are they qualified? Because they're already out shopping and thus receptive to a good sales pitch.

Don't just send your troops door-to-door. Work a simple sales table outside a popular department store or supermarket. Be sure to ask the manager's permission at least a week ahead of time.

Work the table in 90-minute shifts, and use two players, preferably in uniform. Have an adult present behind the table to handle details and track results (never allow children to sell alone!). A folding camp chair greatly helps the "take it easy" approach for the sales supervisor.

A few sales tips: Always greet everyone with a smile. Leave a clear path to the sample merchandise. Make a sign big enough for approaching shoppers to see. Encourage the kids to use their personality and youth to their best advantage. Make sure they talk up the product from their point of view.

3. Make It Quick

Lets face it, people are in a hurry. You want your message to "register" with your prospect in 10 seconds or less.

If you're selling from a card table at a shopping center, use simple signs with bold colors. Deliver the gist of your offering clearly and concisely. Signs made by the team have more appeal than a more "professional"-looking sign. A few helium balloons can also attract more people to your sales table.

Example: "Football Fundraiser-Free Candy With Donation!"

If your team is selling door-to-door, always use a flyer that explains everything. Make sure that your sellers hand the flyer to each prospect as they smile and introduce themselves. Use bullet points to quickly get your message across.

4. Always Tell Why

Your message should always explain why your team is raising money. People enjoy helping out a good cause. Failing to explain what your effort is all about makes it easier for folks to just say no.

Examples: "We're raising money for new uniforms." or "We're going to the Regional Championships!"

Each player has a vested interest in raising enough money for the team. This enthusiasm will show through and make people feel good about helping your cause. Show your players how to persuade a potential supporter just by telling them why.

5. Ask For Donations

Let's face it, not everyone is going to want what you're selling, no matter how great a product it is. Make sure your sellers make it clear that a simple donation is always welcomed. List suggested donation amounts at the bottom of your sales flyer or order form.

If you're fundraising at a shopping center, keep a big plastic jug clearly labeled "Donations" in a prominent place on your sales table. By making it easy for someone to make a donation, you've eliminated the merchandise requirement. Any donation goes 100 percent to the bottom line!

Using any or all of these five profit boosters will help maximize your results, and bring in the money your team or league needs. Even better, use all of these tips to boost your bottom line and make fundraising a simple task.