

# WESTFIELD YOUTH FOOTBALL

## 2016 COACHING HANDBOOK

Coaching can be one of the most satisfying experiences in your life. As a coach, you have the opportunity to make a positive impact and influence so many young lives. It is also a responsibility unlike any other.

Westfield Youth Football is only as good as the people who are involved with it. We are proud of our coaches and the quality of their coaching.

We recognize our guidelines and coaching requirements are demanding. However, because of it, we believe that we are attracting and developing the best-trained coaches of any youth sports program in the area. The commitment is unlike any other youth sports program but the reward is unparalleled.

Your desire and dedication to help the youth of our communities learn this very enjoyable and challenging sport is commendable. Your time and efforts are appreciated by the Board of Directors of Westfield Youth Football, the parents, and most of all, by the kids themselves.

Use this Handbook as a guide to prepare for the upcoming season. The time involved is extremely demanding, and so are the expectations which we hold on all of our volunteer coaches. We expect nothing but the best, as do our players and parents alike.

Follow the expectations and guidelines precisely. These terms are non-negotiable, and the impact of your influence on our players will be something they carry on for hopefully a very long time.

The WYF Board of Directors is looking forward to carrying on the strong tradition that is Westfield Youth Football.

Best of luck to all of you this year,

Bob St. Pierre  
President, WYF

## INTRODUCTION

In an effort to continually improve its youth football program, Westfield Youth Football has chosen to publish a coaching handbook to serve as a guide for its Volunteer Assistant Coaches. The Board of Westfield Youth Football feels that this handbook, when viewed as a whole, will provide you, the Assistant Coach, valuable information and new insights on coaching youth football.

## JOB DESCRIPTIONS

### HEAD COACH

**Authority** - The Head Coach is the primary leader on the field, both on game day and during practice. He is responsible for all the safety and activity that involves the children and coaches. He is the final authority for all matters pertaining to the proper execution and implementation of the WYF program as it is outlined in the WYF by-laws, Participation Handbook, and SAFL Handbook. His authority is an extension of the board of directors.

**Chain of Command** - The WYF League, although it is a private non-profit organization, functions under the umbrella of the Suburban Amateur Football League. Like the SAFL, WYF has a working board of directors. (for roles and responsibilities of board members and their authority refer to WYF 2016 by-Laws.) The board of directors defers the responsibility of hiring and terminating membership of subordinate coaching staff to the Head Coach in keeping with the WYF by-laws and this coaching handbook. The Head Coach can design his chain of command below him (offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator, etc.) at his discretion.

**Roles and Responsibilities** - Plan, organize, implement, and direct all team and individual practice and game activities. Coordinate development of winning attitudes, fundamental skills, team and individual discipline, sportsmanship and citizenship. Establish lines of communication with parents and/or guardians of team members. Adhere to coaching philosophies, requirements, and guidelines set forth by the Board of Directors of the organization and the SAFL.

**Coaching Staff** - It is one of the major functions of the Head Coach to assemble and manage his coaching staff. After the application and CORI process is completed, it is the responsibility of the head coach to insure that his subordinate coaching staff are trained, briefed on his style of leadership and expectations. He is not only responsible for hiring his staff but in the unfortunate event of misconduct he is responsible for discipline including termination.

### ASSISTANT COACH

**Responsibility** - Carry out any and all assignments and duties delegated by the Head Coach. Assume all authority, responsibility and teaching obligations in the event the Head Coach is not available.

**Conduct** - Assistant Coaches are responsible to read and comply with all directives set forth in the WYFL by-laws 2016, Participant Handbook 2016, and this Coaches Handbook 2016 in accordance with Ethics as discussed in the SAFL by-laws.

It is also important that all Coaches instruct each team member fairly and impartially without

demonstrating favor to any child least not his own.

**Attendance/Commitment** - Assistant Coaches will make every effort to attend all practices and games on time. If an Assistant Coach cannot attend or will be late to a practice or game, he is responsible for ensuring a qualified substitute Coach is arranged.

If an Assistant Coach cannot attend either a practice or a game, he will notify the Head Coach at least 24 hours in advance of the event unless in the case of an emergency. In the unfortunate event of an unexcused absence, an Assistant Coach may be disciplined up to and including termination.

Common sense prevails, but it is necessary that our Assistant Coaches realize the importance of and the level of commitment this sport requires.

### **Assignments**

Head Coaches will provide clear guidance to each Assistant Coach with regards to their assignments and responsibilities. If the Assistant Coach has questions on tasking or is unclear on duties, it is his responsibility to clarify these issues with the Head Coach. Assistant Coaches will take ownership of tasks assigned by the Head Coach. This means taking responsibility for the research, preparation, and execution of football instruction.

### **Active vs. Passive Coaching**

Active Coaching in this context means engaging in instruction of team players. Passive Coaching is being on the field but not participating in drills or the instruction of team players. (Being on the field with hands in pockets providing no instruction is an example of Passive Coaching.) It is important that our coaches make the most of every moment we have with our players. They watch everything you do. If our coaches are lax then our players are lax. If our coaches are well disciplined and actively engaged in the collective process of coaching impressionable youths on the field; the results will speak for themselves. Be part of the solution!

### **Playbook Selection and Execution**

The Head Coach is the selection authority for the team playbook. All changes and additions to the team playbook are at the discretion of the Head Coach. Assistant Coaches will not add any plays to the team playbook without direct approval from the Head Coach. At no time can an Assistant Coach utilize his own (non-team playbook) plays during team practice or during a game.

Implementation of “non-approved” plays within the program causes disunity in the ranks and undermines the authority of the Head Coach. Your cooperation in this area reinforces the integrity of the program.

### **Conditions of hire**

All Coaches will undergo a CORI check prior to the SAFL weigh-in. All Coaches must agree to comply with all SAFL and WYF by-Laws, Code of Conduct and Ethics, and this handbook. All Assistant Coaches must be willing to provide unconditional support of the Head Coach.

### **Termination Procedures**

As well as hiring his Assistant Coaches, it is also the responsibility of the Head Coach, when unfortunate situations present themselves, to terminate any Assistant Coach at his discretion without a Board of Directors vote. Grounds for termination are not limited to those discussed within this handbook.

The following procedures for disciplinary action against an Assistant Coach are as follows.

First Offense: Verbal warning from the Head Coach

Second Offense: Written warning from the Head Coach

*The Head Coach will notify the Board of Directors immediately when a written warning has been issued. The warning letter will be provided to the Board of Directors as soon as possible via electronic means.*

Third Offense: Grounds for termination at the discretion of the Head Coach

## **WESTFIELD YOUTH FOOTBALL COACHING PHILOSOPHY**

1. A coach has a great amount of influence on the young people on his team. Children notice how coaches dress, how they talk, how they control or fail to control their emotions, if they are fair, if they know the rules of the game, if they have a sense of humor and several of other things that will be impressed on their minds for the future.

As WYF Football Coach -- you are not just a person who has graciously agreed to volunteer your time -- you have a very important job on your hands. Be the best example you can!!!

2. The home life of some of our participants is not always what it should be. As a youth league football coach, you can meet some of the unmet needs of certain youngsters who have serious problems by simply being considerate, caring, friendly and understanding. Don't forget to listen for things that are not always said. Hear what they are not saying!!

3. Winning is important -- it is the cornerstone of athletic endeavors -- but it should not supersede other values. Youth league football coaches are encouraged to teach in defeat also. Show how to fight back from adversity, how to get ready for the next game and how to never give up, regardless of the odds. Teach players how to win but remember you never know how good it feels to win until you've lost a few times. ***Instruct rather than criticize - teach rather than berate.***

4. Seek cooperation, suggestions and involvement from parents. Be aware and understand that some parents, at times, become irrational about their children; emotions sometimes boil over. The best way to handle a problem is to discuss it calmly and face to face. Most problems can and will be solved with proper communication and dialog. In the case of a constant and extreme problem, notify the Head Coach.

**Therefore, the Board of Directors advises you to:**

Inspect practice and game fields for rocks, glass, holes, etc., that may deem the facilities unsafe. **Inspect it and clean it up before you allow your players to use it.**

Inspect player's equipment and promptly advise replacement of any defective equipment. **Do not allow any player to participate with defective or damaged equipment under any condition.**

Use restraint in periods of hot weather. Be constantly aware of the possibility of exhaustion, dehydration and heat stroke. Make sure every player has access to water often. **Never deny a water break for any reason.**

Practice emotional control. Never berate or unduly criticize a player. Encourage and teach. **Never use psychological, physical, or verbal intimidation.**

Explain and illustrate many times, the proper placement of the head and neck in tackling, blocking, and as a ball carrier. Absolutely never allow the use of the head, helmet or facemask to spear, lead or block with. **Remember!!! Teach -- head up, eyes ahead, head to the side.**

In case of injury -- remain cool, calm and collected. Try to calm the injured player. **It is better to be safe than sorry.** In the event of any doubt, contact an EMT or Doctor immediately. Never assume the role of a physician. Only perform activities that conform to certified First Aid training you have received. **Keep head, neck, back, and compound fracture injuries immobile until a Doctor or EMT arrives.**

Be complete and thorough in everything you do. Take a professional attitude. **Accept the responsibility that goes with the job.**

## **Four Goals for a Successful Coaching Experience**

1. Provide experiences that will develop a desire in the players to continue participating in sports. Teach sound football fundamentals; let the players have fun and winning will take care of itself.
2. Provide experiences that will enable each participant to see his or her worth or value as an individual. Stress the importance of each individual team member. Good teams beat great players every time.
3. Provide experiences that will teach principles and attitudes that will benefit the participant later in life. Always emphasize the importance of commitment to excellence in academic endeavors.
4. Provide experiences that will prevent a child from dropping out of the program. Teach basic skills, do not criticize or berate players. Emphasize equal participation. Let kids learn from success and failure.

## **Coaching Requirements and Rules**

SAFL rules will be followed with the following exceptions and additions:

1. All coaches, including assistants must obtain USA Football certification and be approved by the Coaching Commissioner. Certification requirements can be found at [www.USAfootball.com](http://www.USAfootball.com).

2. All coaches will adhere to the SAFL Coaches Code of Ethics, which can be found in the SAFL Handbook and shall be drug, tobacco, and alcohol free at all youth football activities. Coaches are representatives of the entire league and any behavior that reflects badly on the league whether at a WYFL event or not can result in the coach's suspension.
3. All coaches pledge to teach proper and safe technique and will refrain from teaching or conducting dangerous drills and/or activities.
4. During hot weather, all coaches will provide a rest and water break every 20 minutes. Coaches are responsible to see that every player receives proper amounts of water during practice. The use of salt tablets or any other substance is expressly forbidden.
5. The Head Coach is responsible to have a cellular phone available at all practices and games. The phone number for EMS and ambulance services must be taped to the training boxes.
6. All coaches will consider any head, neck, or back injury a serious and potentially dangerous situation. In the event of such injury the coach should defer immediately to the medic who is required to be on the field at all practices and games. If he/she is not there for any reason:
  - *Never remove the helmet or shoulder pads (unless absolutely necessary to provide CPR).*
  - *Immediately check for unconsciousness, tingling sensations in arms or legs, and paralysis.*
  - *Keep the player immobilized -- calm the player.*
  - *Call 911 or an ambulance service if any doubt exists about the player's condition.*
7. All coaches will be required to provide an enjoyable learning environment for youth football league participants. Attention should be devoted to the participants physical, social and personal development while adhering to the following youth coaching values:
  - Teach Sportsmanship
  - Promote Growth through Participation
  - Promote Fitness
  - Teach Coping with Success and Failure
  - Develop Skills
  - Develop Positive Authority Attitudes
  - Instill a Desire to Succeed
  - Instill Self Discipline
  - Teach Teamwork
  - Develop Cooperation Between Individuals
  - Promote Responsibility
  - Provide an Outlet for Energy Release
  - Build Character
  - Make the Experience Fun
  - Develop Commitment
  - Serve as a Positive Role Model

## **Coaching Conduct**

It is the responsibility of each coach to be familiar with the rules, policies and guidelines of Westfield Youth Football.

1. In order to help in the promotion of a better sports environment, the use of foul or profane language by coaches, players, fans, etc., is prohibited while participating in any Westfield Youth Football League Football function.
2. Any derogatory remarks to officials, players or any member of the other team, by coaches or players will not be condoned. Violation of this rule, at the discretion of the official, may result in suspension from or forfeiture of the game.
3. Officials may eject a coach, player or fan from any game in accordance with the official rules. The officials and coaches may also suspend the player(s) guilty of flagrant violations of rules from further participation in games.
4. Any player and/or coach engaging in fights or any other flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct before, during or after a practice and/or game will be suspended indefinitely. This applies from the time the person enters the facility area, until the time the person leaves the facility area. This shall encompass all unsportsmanlike conduct such as obscene or profane language and/or appearing at the facility under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

## PRACTICE SCHEDULE AND RULES

1. The weekly practice schedule is as follows: Practice begins at the beginning of August and will be every day
2. When practice is over, at least one coach must stay with the team until every player has been picked up. **Never leave a player unattended.**
3. To be in good standing, the player must attend all practice and game activities unless he is granted an excused absence. Any player missing 3 practices unexcused during a year can be dismissed from the team. Any player missing a combination of 7 or more games and practices, excused or unexcused, can be dismissed from the team at the determination of the head coach and the executive board. **An excused absence will be granted for illness, school, church or family reasons.**
4. Should a player miss all of the weekly practice sessions prior to a game, regardless of the reason, the player must sit out the game. If the absences were excused, he will immediately be elevated to the position he held prior to his absence upon his return to practice. If the absences were not excused, the head coach may recommend to the League Director that the player be dropped from the league. If this occurs, **fees will not be refunded.**
5. Players may be required to set out of a game or partial game for disciplinary actions, but the parents of the player and the opposing coaches must be made aware of this before the start of the game or the night before the game for away games.
6. It is the responsibility of the Head Coach to make arrangements for the use of a practice field. **Always obtain permission before using a facility.** If using a college, high school or junior high facility, never use blocking sleds, dummies, etc., without first obtaining permission of the Athletic Director or Head Coach.
8. Do not allow players to sit on or throw helmets. **Do not use Duct Tape on any equipment for any reason. Any player caught sitting on a helmet, throwing a helmet or using tape improperly will be suspended for one game. A second violation will result in dismissal from the league.** Athletic tape is acceptable for use on all equipment **other than helmets.**

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER SITUATIONS**

### **Practice Situations**

1. If the weather is uncomfortably cold and/or wet, or visible lightning is in the area, or the weather service is notifying the public of unstable weather activity, practice must be canceled immediately. When the heat index exceeds 104 degrees or when the temperature exceeds 99 degrees, practice and games must be postponed. Violation of this policy will result in immediate suspension of coaching privileges.
2. Coaches should always demonstrate common sense with regard to extremely hot, cold or unstable weather. A coach must never choose to risk players' health, safety or well-being. Any coach found doing so will be suspended from the program for life, pending board appeal.
3. If practice is canceled due to weather conditions, less than one hour into the practice, another practice day may be scheduled without violating the weekly limitation on practice sessions.

### **Game Situations**

1. In the event unstable weather forces a game to be suspended once it has begun, a 45-minute cumulative delay period will be utilized to determine if the game can continue. The Field Manager, in conjunction with the Officials will make the final determination. A decision to delay or cancel a game will be made using the following criteria:
  - If lightning or storm activity is visible in the playing area.
  - The weather service is notifying the public of dangerous storm activity.
  - The weather is uncommonly cold and wet; health and sickness risk.
  - Continued play might cause unnecessary and severe damage to the playing field.
2. If a game is canceled any time after completion of the first half, it will be considered a complete game and the team that is leading will be declared the winner. If the game is tied, it will be recorded as so.
3. If a game is canceled any time prior to completion of the first half, it will be rescheduled and played to completion from the point where play was suspended if possible; otherwise the game will be recorded as a bye. Delayed or canceled games will be made up before the following week's scheduled games. A make-up game will be considered one of the three practice sessions allowed weekly.
4. If League Officials determine that games scheduled for a particular day must be canceled prior to their start, the Head Coach of each team will be notified. The notification timetable will be advance notice of no less than two (2) hr. plus anticipated travel time. The Head Coach is then responsible for notifying his players.

## GAME DAY - FIELD RULES

1. Only coaches, players, water boys and chain crew may be on the sidelines. Coaches and players must remain inside the coaches' restriction box during a game (the 40-yard area between the 30-yard lines). Chain crews should be limited in age to ensure adequate understanding of official instructions. The total number of coaches allowed on the sideline is 4.

You are allowed up to 2 statisticians or trainers, but they are restricted from coaching functions. Statisticians are allowed outside of the coaching box but they are not allowed to give coaching points. Any violation of this rule is enforceable by a 15-yard penalty.

**No ONE besides members of the team and coaching crew are allowed on the sidelines or field!** Any violation of this is enforceable as a 15 yard unsportsmanlike penalty.

2. Parents and other spectators must remain behind the track, restrictive fence or other established barriers. Camera operators may be on the track as long as they do not obstruct spectator view at any time. At no time are cameras allowed on the field of play during a game. Note: Only one person per camera allowed on the track.

3. Trash clean-up procedures are as follows:

Failure to clean up trash after the game may cause the league to lose the privilege of playing on the field. **Remember we are guests of the facility.** Let's act accordingly. The Head Coach is responsible to see that the team cleans up the trash on the sideline after the game. The Team Commissioner is responsible to see that parents and spectators pick up all trash in and around the stands after the game.

4. Anyone obviously intoxicated or under the influence of a chemical substance will not be allowed to attend or participate in any Westfield Youth Football activity or function.
5. The home team is responsible to provide at least three field officials and a time keeper. In order to avoid any appearance of impropriety use of relatives of any player or coach for field officials should be avoided. The use of certified officials is recommended, and at no time should an official be used that is under the age of seventeen. Failure of the home team to provide an adequate number of officials for a game will result in forfeit of the game.
6. No talking or yelling at the timekeeper will be allowed. The timekeeper follows cues and direction from the field officials and the field manager. If a coach feels the timekeeper is in error, he must communicate his concern to the field official, who will then take appropriate action.
7. All new jerseys are required to have numbers on the front and back. Beginning in the 2010 season all jerseys will have numbers on front and back without exception.

8. Irrational or inappropriate behavior by spectators and fans will simply not be accepted. In the event of irrational, inappropriate, un-sportsmanlike, threatening or abusive fan behavior, the following procedures will be implemented by the Officials or the Field Manager:

- First, a warning will be issued.
- Second, a 15-yard un-sportsmanlike conduct flag will be thrown against the fan's team.
- Third, the game will be halted and the fan or spectator will be asked to leave the premises.
- Fourth, if the violator doesn't leave the premises within two minutes, police will be notified.

## DEALING WITH PARENTS

Coaching Westfield Youth Football is exciting and rewarding, but from time to time, you may experience difficulty with parents. Some may want their children to play more or they might question some of your judgments as a coach. This is normal, so don't feel that you're alone if this happens. Here are a few thoughts to remember when dealing with parents:

1. Always listen to parent's ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement however resist unfair pressure. You are the coach and it's your responsibility to make the final decisions. Most importantly, be fair. If you treat all players equally, you will gain respect!!
2. No coach can please everybody – don't try! Know what your objectives are, communicate them to the parents and do what you believe to be of value to the team, not the parents.
3. From the very beginning of the season, make certain all parents know your ground rules. Have rules, regulations, your philosophy, your phone number, practice dates/times, etc., printed on a sheet of paper you can pass out to all parents.
4. Be constant. Try not to change your rules or your coaching philosophy during the season. If, for some reason, you must do so -- make sure every player and every parent is informed immediately.
5. Handle any confrontation one-on-one NOT in a crowd situation. Don't be defensive. Don't argue with the parent. Listen to their viewpoint and thank them for it. If necessary, contact the League Director and schedule a meeting to iron out any differences.
6. NEVER discuss individual players with other parents. It is unfair to the player. Remember, the grapevine will hang you every time. Make sure your assistant coaches also adhere to this rule.
7. Ask parents not to criticize their children during a practice or game. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents. Explain that you must be under complete control of your team when they are on your "turf".
8. Ask your player's parents to remember that Game Officials are human and may make a mistake. In fact, they may make several mistakes. Officials should not be subject to criticism during ball games -- not by coaches, not by players and not by parents or other spectators.  
  
Explain that the rules we play by are not the same as the rules they see at the pro, college and even high school level. Most of the abusive fan criticism and behavior is simply a result of their lack of knowledge of our playing rules.
9. Ask your parents to get involved. There are many activities in which they can be of great help and benefit to the team and to the league, such as: carpooling, keeping statistics, reporting scores to the newspaper, cleaning the field after games, score keeping, fund raising, etc.
10. Remember that assistant coaches must be approved in advance. If a parent decides he/she wants to help you coach; he/she must meet league criteria and qualifications.
11. Always remember that you will be dealing with all types of children and with parents of differing backgrounds and ideals. One of your main challenges as a coach is to deal with these differences in a positive manner that will lead to cooperation, enthusiasm and enjoyment for all.

## GUIDELINES FOR THE REQUIRED PRE-SEASON PARENT MEETING

Every Westfield Youth Football Head Coach is required to conduct a pre-season parent meeting. The main purpose of the meeting is to:

- Open lines of communication between the coaches and the parents.
- Allow you to explain your coaching philosophy, rules and regulations.

Arrange to have your meeting at a time convenient to you and to the parents. If you can, arrange for a meeting room at a school, church, office or community building. If you cannot manage this, meet with the parents at your first regular practice. Once you have decided on the date, time and location, call all your parents. It helps if both parents can attend.

### **The following is an outline of topics you must cover in your coach-parent meeting:**

1. Introduce yourself and your assistant(s). You should give a little background information on yourself and each assistant.
2. Pass out a schedule that lists location of practices, dates of practices, start and finish times of practice, dates and location of games, etc.
3. Go over each piece of equipment the league provides. Explain the purpose of the various pieces of equipment and demonstrate the proper way to put the equipment on. Illustrate the proper way to unsnap hip and tail pads so that the rubber is not damaged. **Read the helmet warning label and tell the parents they are never, never, never to adapt the inside of the helmet for any purpose -- this is essential.**

Tell the parents what should be done prior to checking equipment in -- cleaning helmet, washing pants, etc. Explain what type shoes should be used – players may never use baseball cleats.

4. Talk about providing water during practice sessions and games.
5. Go over all of your rules, regulations, policies, and coaching philosophies. Explain the league rule concerning game playing time. Explain the rules we play under -- make a copy and hand out if you prefer.
6. Give special attention to the Sparring, Head Tackle/Head Contact and Facemask rules. Emphasize that players should never try to tackle or block with the head down. Also emphasize that players should never lead with their facemasks into the chest of another player.
7. Tell the parents point blank that football is a collision/contact sport that can be dangerous. Make them fully aware of the risks. Also point out all the rules that the league incorporates to reduce these risks.
8. Talk about car-pooling for practices and for games and thank the parents for their support.