



Background

Over the last decade there has been a large movement in amateur sports towards the principles and guidelines outlined in Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD). At this point all major sports have shifted to a modified game at the atom and novice age groups (6-10), including most football communities. Refer to “Football for Life” on Football Canada’s website.

This shift to a modified game has been for the outcomes:

- Enhanced Participation – more kids actively participate
- Enhanced Excellence – development is focused on age appropriate learnings
- Enhanced Capacity - to support enhanced participation and excellence
- Enhanced Interaction - amongst all Stakeholders

Over the last decade the sport of football has been making the movement, however the specifics on how it has been adopted is inconsistent as many programs moved prior to the LTAD football guidelines being published in 2009. It’s important to note that the CDMFA is the last major centre in Canada that has not adopted LTAD in any form, though it has been discussed at the CDMFA a number of times, including two attempts to implement a modified program, the last being in 2012. Though significant changes were discussed by a specialist group including experienced coaches and CDMFA executives, only minor changes were proposed to and adopted by the CDMFA Board for adoption due to the difficulty in implementing large change in the league that is governed by all member associations. As is typical of the CDMFA board, those changes have slowly been backed out, largely in part due to the influence that the officials have on the league and the need for consistent rules across all levels of play. The reversion has occurred with little resistance, as it has moved back to traditional tackle football rules.

At the football summit held by the Eskimos in 2014, involving representation from all levels of amateur football, one more proposal was made to adopt LTAD at the atom level. The intent was proposed at the CDMFA AGM in April 2014 and a committee identified to move it forward after the 2014 season.

It’s also important to note, that over the last decade there has been a steady decline in Atom level registrations which has rippled up to impact higher age levels, which has been a concern raised by the University of Alberta. Though sports registrations are generally down, football registrations even more so. This is contrasted by the fact that the Football Alberta Novice (6-8) Flag program has gone from 60, to 120 to 240 players each year. This program was created outside of the CDMFA, after the opportunity was presented to the CDMFA and determined that it did not fit the CDMFA’s scope as a tackle league. In addition, an Atom flag league has now emerged to serve the demand from players desiring to stay in the program.

In addition, the Novice program has a very high retention rate (nearly 100% of eligible) that CDMFA tackle programs would be very envious of, including associations that are considered strong with healthy registration numbers. The modified program is attractive for recruiting and attractive for retention. It has become very obvious that the market at a novice and atom age level is demanding a modified program.

In summary, there is an opportunity for the CDMFA to alter the Atom program in alignment with LTAD, to improve athlete development while also meeting parent and player demand. In addition, timing is very important as a second parallel league is emerging and the opportunity to create a continuous development program to transition children from Novice Flag to High School tackle is very limited. The amateur tackle program is at significant risk, which will impact the high school level and the junior level, which is why the higher level programs have become concerned.

Next Steps:

At the March 18th meeting the following will be proposed:

A formal and comprehensive Atom Program to replace the existing Atom Program for the 2015 season, which will outline Program Advantages and Options/Opportunities, Competition, Tiering, Game Rules, Fields and Scheduling, Officials, Travel, Financials, Team and Player Registrations

The program will be provided with Notice of Motion to accept and will be voted upon at the CDMFA AGM on April 11th.

We are providing notice today for the following reasons:

- 1) Allow you time to continue to socialize that the Atom Program is under review for the 2015 season.
- 2) Allow you time to read and understand "Football for Life"
- 3) Allow you time to ensure you have adequate and appropriate representation at the March and April meetings.
- 4) Allow you time to have someone come and discuss the program with your board prior to the AGM so they can make an informed decision (between March 5 and April 10).

Note, this is long term change to grow the sport of Football in the capital district, by making fundamental changes that are barriers to growth.

Jason Cinq-Mars
President CDFMA

Long Term Athlete Development

Long Term Athlete Development and Football for Life defines its age groups in a way that is not consistent with age groups as defined within the CDMFA (most leagues differ across Canada). LTAD defines one group of players as ages 6-9 and another as 10-12. In adopting the direction for use at the CDMFA, where there is range in the 6-9 guideline, the more complex options are considered and the less complex options from the 10-12 group are considered.

The following is extracted directly from Football for Life, under copyright permission:

LTAD 6-9 years	LTAD 10-12 years	CDMFA Atom 8-10 years
<p>Focuses on FUNdamentals (p24 <i>Football Canada's Football for Life 2009</i>).</p> <p>This stage represents the entry into physical activity and sport, including the development of physical literacy. Athletes develop basic physical literacy and enjoy their first participation in organized Football. The guiding principles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe community-based programs • Equal participation for all • Skill development is placed ahead of competition; Broad- based stage-appropriate development including Football and other sports and activities • Social development and fun are never forgotten 	<p>Focuses on Learn to Train (p25 <i>Football Canada's Football for Life 2009</i>).</p> <p>This stage represents development of a well-rounded set of Football skills, complimented by participation in other sports, and for many athletes, using Flag/Touch Football as an ideal introductory experience. Skill athletes develop basic and integrated Football skills and utilize these in competitive game situations. Guiding principles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletes have the opportunity to develop skills in a variety of offensive and defensive Football positions • Training, competition and positional play is appropriate to the development and maturation of individual athletes • Skill development is more important than winning 	<p>Focuses on Fundamentals while including the basics around Learn to Train.</p> <p>This represents the entry into tackle football, where some players may have played Novice Flag Football. Athletes should develop basic physical literacy including safe blocking and tackling. The following guiding principles should be balanced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player safety and fun are never forgotten • Equal participation for all • Individual skill development prioritized over game development • Skill development over winning. • Diverse development across multiple positions • Competition limited and only for the purpose of fun and learning.
<p>Objectives: Introduce the Game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice and master fundamental movement skills before sport- specific skills are introduced • Emphasize overall development of the ABC's of athleticism: agility, balance, coordination and speed 	<p>Objectives: Basic Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a critical period for development of motor skills and coordination • Participate in a wide range of sports. Develop speed, power and endurance using games 	<p>Objectives: Introduce the Tackle Game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a transition point to take players, coaches and parents from Novice Flag to Pee wee Tackle. • Understanding of the basic tackle elements of the game, including safe tackling and safe blocking. A very high

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in a wide range of sports. Develop speed, power and endurance using games • The first window of opportunity for training speed occurs around age 6-8 for girls and 7-9 for boys. Developing this capacity is important for future athletic development • Initial organized sport activity and introduction to competition and basics of rules occurs in this stage. Football can be introduced as one of several sport activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on development of general sport skills • Introduce Football competition at local/club levels. Participate in several positions & disciplines to build a foundation of Football skills 	<p>focus on using 'making head way' from Football Canada.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first window of opportunity for training speed occurs around age 6-8 for girls and 7-9 for boys. Developing this capacity is important for future athletic development (focus in early season practices); including movement skills, agility, balance and coordination. • Ages 10 is a critical period to <i>start</i> development of motor skills and coordination (focus in mid-season practices and games); including speed, power and endurance. • Understanding of the basic rules of the game through exposure to a limited number of positions and plays (limited complexity) • Introduce games for the purposes of developing skill. Competitiveness in games should never come in front of safety, fun or skill development. • Provide opportunity for new players, new coaches, new officials, new parents.
<p>Development Opportunities: Technical Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throwing, Catching, Kicking • Athletes have the opportunity to develop skills in a variety of offensive and defensive Football positions • Training, competition and positional play is appropriate to the development and maturation of individual athletes 	<p>Development Opportunities: Technical Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throwing, Catching, Kicking • Ball skills: carry, pass, punt, kick, catch • Ball exchanges (hand off, pass) • Tackling, flagging, touching • Blocking and block protection 	<p>Development Opportunities: Technical Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ball skills: carry, pass, catch • Ball exchanges (hand off, pass) • Tackling • Blocking and block protection • Develop positional skills in a variety of offensive and defensive Football positions <p>Note: kicking development moves entirely to peewee</p>
<p>Tactical Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the game • Basic skills are throwing, receiving, kicking 	<p>Tactical Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning the Game- basic rules • Pass routes 	<p>Tactical Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn basic rules that govern the game • Pass routes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn basic rules that govern the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defensive coverage (person to person) • Formation recognition and adjustment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defensive coverage (person to person)
Physical Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agility, Balance, Coordination • Running + Backwards + w/change of directions • Jumping, Twisting and Spinning • Rhythmic Movement • Speed #1 (Hand & Foot Speed) • Aerobic Capacity and Flexibility • Visual Awareness 	Physical Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority on agility and movement and speed • Running + Backwards + w/change of directions • Jumping, Twisting, Turning. Spinning • Agility, Balance, Coordination • Rhythmic Movement • Speed #1 (Hand & Foot Speed), • Aerobic Capacity • Flexibility • Visual Awareness • Limited, body-weight-only strength exercises <p>Late Stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aiming & hitting (eye-hand) • Strength 1 • Speed 1 • Aerobic power 	Physical Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agility, Balance, Coordination • Running + Backwards + w/change of directions • Jumping, Twisting, Turning and Spinning • Rhythmic Movement • Speed #1 (Hand & Foot Speed) • Aerobic Capacity and Flexibility • Visual Awareness • Limited, body-weight-only strength exercises (focus in mid-season practices and games)
Mental Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy Competition • Respecting your opponent • Code of Conduct • Self-awareness 	Mental Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visualization (Learn to Image) • Learn Thought Stop • Learn to Set Goals • Learn to Breathe to Control Nerves • Progressive Muscular Relaxation 	Mental Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy Competition • Respecting your opponent • Code of Conduct • Self-awareness <p>For advanced players only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visualization (Learn to Image) • Learn Thought Stop • Learn to Set Goals • Learn to Breathe to Control Nerves • Progressive Muscular Relaxation
Character - Life Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving 	Character - Life Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving 	Character - Life Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving
Game Options to Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touch/Flag Football is the preferred development game 	Game Options to Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue development through Tackle/Flag/Touch participation 	Game Options to Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small field, small ball

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified Tackle game may be introduced late in the stage • Modified Tackle game has reduced rosters (6 v 6) and rule modifications to promote skill development and confidence. See Learn to Train stage • Small field, small ball • Skills emphasized; competition de-emphasized • Skill development is more important than winning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate: enter a Modified Tackle program. Modified Tackle game has reduced rosters (6 a side or 9 a side) and rule modifications to promote skill development and confidence • Modified Tackle Defense: person-to-person coverage, no motion or stunts, limited numbers of defensive rushers (from 3 to 6 in different divisions), and no defensive line player opposite center • Modified Tackle Offense: no motion, blocking restrictions, a fixed requirement for number of backs, and requirement to make at least one pass attempt every three plays, to help develop a range of skills and game-learning situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills emphasized; competition de-emphasized • Skill development is more important than winning • Modified Tackle game with reduced rosters (6 a side) and rule modifications to promote skill development and confidence • Modified Tackle Defense: person-to-person coverage, no motion or stunts, limited numbers of defensive rushers (3), and no defensive line player opposite center • Modified Tackle Offense: no motion, blocking restrictions, a fixed requirement for number of backs, and requirement to make at least one pass attempt every three plays, to help develop a range of skills and game-learning situations
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Proposal: 6 Player - Atom Tackle Program

Teams

- Teams will play 6-a-side football
- Team Roster no smaller than 9 no larger than 18 (i.e. once 19 players are registered you would then have two teams)
- Age Level: children who will turn 8, 9 or 10 in the current calendar year (by December 31).
- 8 is a shared age with Novice to allow transition early for those players that are ready and later for those that are not.
- Players that are 6-7 would be registered in the Novice program, but would be grandfathered if existing players.
- Each association in the CDMFA can field as many teams as they like and no child who has the commitment and interest to play should be cut.

Game Structure

- It is a tackle game, using the Canadian tackle rules unless stated otherwise.
- In lieu of timed games, teams play a jamboree style of game where each team gets five offensive plays to score from the 35 yard line. Regardless if they score on the first play or lose possession to a turn over, they will get all five plays then the ball will be turned over to the other team to start at the 35 yard line.
- Each touchdown will be worth 1 point and no covert or kick-off will follow.
- Each team will have possession four times (20 offensive plays and 20 defensive plays total)
- During each teams set of five offensive plays they must pass the ball **forward** at least twice.
- Games scores will not be tracked by the league, though we know atom players will track during the game (often incorrectly).
- The game ball is a composite or leather Wilson TDJ.

Field Layout

- Field size is approximately a quarter field (30 yards wide, 45 yards long). A sideline and end zone of a marked field will be used with small pylons (supplied by home team) being used to mark the other sideline, every 5 yards.
- Four games run concurrently on a single field.
- One coach from each team will be allowed on the field each play to assist in setting up each play and coaching between plays. They must be able to stay out of the play (stand 10 yards back and avoid the players during the play) and they must abide by the 1 minute between plays rule.

Player Positioning

- Teams must have three offensive linemen lined up no farther than a one yard split from each other. The two linemen on the outside are considered eligible receivers (i.e. Tight Ends) as well as blockers. Only the Center and the Designated Runningback cannot go downfield for passes.
- Team must have on all plays at least one player lined up as a runningback (behind the quarterback and between the ends of the offensive line) and he is considered good to run with the ball but an ineligible receiver.

Fair Play

- Fair play rules will be in effect and will be openly communicated to parents as an atom league standard.

- All players on the roster must be in the game by the second set of possession and must play a minimum of 10 plays during the game. This will be done on the honour system since there are many factors that may prevent kids from getting 10 plays that are out of the coach's control. Teams are encouraged to assign a parent to count and control this rotation.
- As Atom is focused at learning and development, it is encouraged that all players play all positions at some point in the season. Encouraged, but not required. For example: putting a very small player as the center, may not be 'fun' for them.

Timing

- Field Time will be scheduled as 90 minutes per game.
- 15 minutes is allocated to on field warm ups.
- 60 minutes is allocated to the game and to ensure they do not overrun and impact the next game, they will end 70 minutes after they start without exception.
- No more than 1 minute will be allowed in between each play to keep the game moving. Player requiring more coaching should be sent off the field to another coach.
- No more than 3 minutes will be allowed to change possession.
- Time count violations will result in a loss of down to keep the game on time.

Officials

- Each team must supply one official. They should either be a coach with at least one year of experience, a junior official (received training) or a 2nd year bantam or older player that has played at least three seasons and has a strong understanding of the game.
- Officials are encouraged to allow players to learn the game in a safe environment. They are also encouraged to let the game flow, correcting players after the play when it has no bearing on the outcome. Coaches are encouraged to provide a safe learning environment for officials.
- Teams are welcome to supply two officials as learning opportunities.
- One official should be positioned downfield and one should be positioned near the line of scrimmage.
- In all penalty situations the official will question the coach as to whether to accept or decline.
- Accepted defensive penalties will be assessed as charged and the down will be played over.
- Declined defensive penalties will result in the play standing.
- Accepted offensive penalties will be assessed as charged and the down will be played over unless the penalty would take them back past the 35 yard line in which case the team loses a down and the ball is placed on the 35 yard line.
- Declined offensive penalties will result in the play standing.

Coaches

- Minimum 2 coaches. One on the field, one at the bench.
- Coaches must have taken "Making Headway" prior to coaching players.
- Coaches should take "Intro to Competition – Tackle"

League and Divisions Structure

- Tiering is a goal of this level with the main focus being on getting apples playing with apples as quickly as possible – for the purposes of skill development, not competitiveness.
- For that reason, associations fielding multiple teams may sort players based on ability – so they play against other players with similar ability and can have fun while learning. As tiering is ultimately for the purposes of having fun, teams may decide to group friends together. Regardless, fair play rules will be in effect.

- Teams will initially self-declare their Tier. As there are no season standings and there are no playoffs, self declaring tiers where players can learn is in each team's best interest.
- Using self declared tiers, teams will be placed in 4 team divisions by the CDMFA.
- Each division will play on the same field at the same time. They will not be located with Pee wee or Bantam games.
- Teams can start practising at the August 1st start date and initially play all other teams in their division over the 3 weekends prior to Labor Day. They will receive the Labor Day weekend off when divisions will be re-assessed by the Atom VP. Changes will be made and teams will play 3 more games. After than the Tier's will be re-assessed again for a final three games that will conclude mid-October. This would amount to a nine game season over twelve weeks including training camps and the Labor Day Weekend break which is an appropriate amount for kids at that age level according to LTAD.
- Jamborees will no longer occur for Atom.
- No trophies or championships would be declared but teams would be free to celebrate whatever they thought of the year.
- At all games the spectator area would be renamed the Positive Zone. This is a bit of a "perfect world" stretch but every effort must be made to not only get the players started in a positive way but also their parents. Coaches, players and officials are going to make mistakes during this program and yelling or cursing at them won't make it better. Each team will be instructed to have a parent monitor for their program to intervene when a parent from their team goes to the dark side.

Financials

- Revenue is lower as there would no gate fees for playoffs
- Costs are lower as more players are on each field (48 on field)
- Costs are lower as there are no EFOA fees
- Costs are lower as there are no trophies to maintain
- Costs are lower as no jamboree is required for Atom
- Value to parents is higher as players will get more play time (on average)
- Football Alberta Fees – insurance would remain the same by person. Team fees would need to be reviewed in sight of the smaller rosters.
- Summary: League fees for the 6 man team would be \$200 vs the current \$700 and we would also be able to re-direct \$6400 of existing Atom subsidies to Peewee and Bantam.

	Previous - All Atom teams (16)	Revised Program - All Atom teams (32)
Total Gate Fees, Atom playoffs	2,700.00	0.00
League Fees, Atom	11,200.00	6,400.00
Subsidized (grants)	9,600.00	3,200.00
Total Income by Atom Team	23,500.00	9,600.00
FR - Regular Season Atom	12,000.00	7,500.00
FR - Jamboree Atom	1,700.00	0.00
Gate Fees Expenses, Atom	700.00	0.00
Minor Officials, Atom	1,162.80	0.00
Officials Clinic, Atom	2,600.00	1,600.00
Officials, Atom Games	3,321.00	0.00
Officials, Atom Jamboree	2,296.00	0.00
Trophies	500.00	0.00
Total Expense	24,279.80	9,100.00
Net Income	779.80	500.00

Benefits

- A less complex game (less players, no special teams) provides a less intimidating entrance for new players, new coaches, new parents and new officials. It will help the sport grow.
- A less complex game, allows coaches to focus more of their practices on skill development than on complex plays.
- Skill instruction can be focused since there will be no need to spend time in practise on special teams.
- Linemen will have an opportunity to learn to be receivers.
- A less complex game removes the reliance of the league on officials that require similar rules across all age levels.
- Focusing strictly on offensive and defensive skills and systems will allow for quicker uptake of the game during the preseason (shorter pre-season)
- No timing keeps the parents calm about a clock running through scores and injuries.
- By eliminating the need for EFOA involvement it will free up members of their association to focus on the Pee-Wee and Bantam levels and allow the Atom games to go off without the threat of cancellation due to no referee showing up (as these games can almost referee themselves).
- By focusing the Atoms all in one or two locations, it will free up scarce facilities across the Edmonton areas for better and more consistent access by Pee-Wee and Bantam teams.
- Opens the door to so many other communities in the Edmonton area who would like to field minor football teams but are small and would struggle to get enough interest for a 12 man team (i.e. Barrhead, Breton, Gibbons, Bon Accord, etc.)
- Allows teams to grow at an easier rate, rather than trying to double all players, equipment, coaches to go from one large team to two.
- More kids will get more play time.
- Kids will play like competition, will be more engaged and will have more fun. They will remember close games more than blowouts.

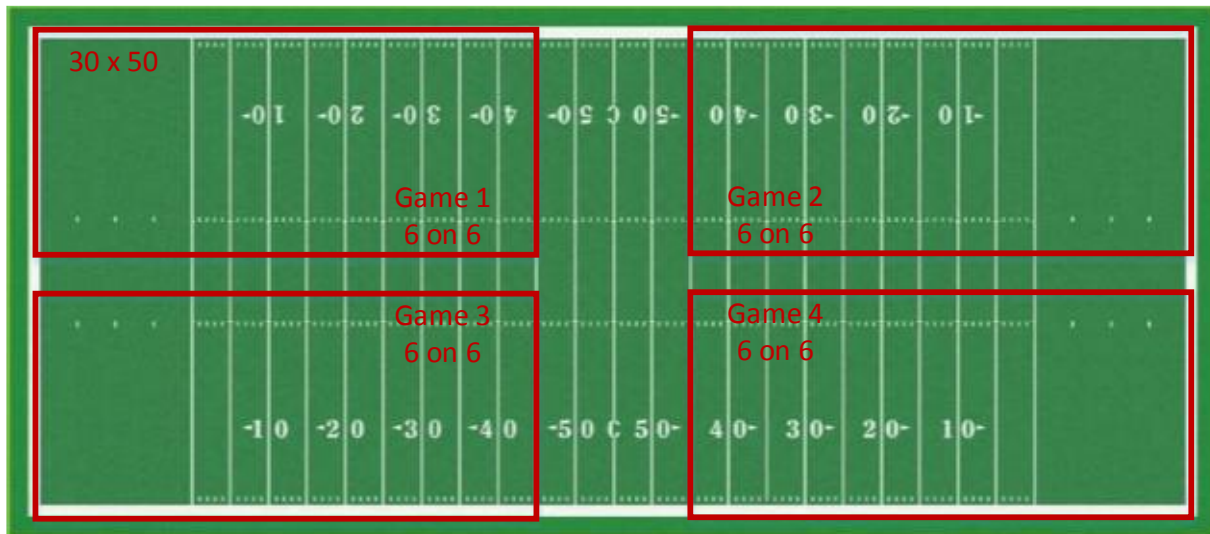
Opportunities

- Play some games when Novice plays to help novice players and parents see the transition.
- Support officiating with U of A Bears
- Name divisions to recognize partnerships
- Create league training / play books for re-use to simplify onboarding new coaches

Appendix A - Matrix – # players, and suggested # teams

	9 to 18	19 to 27	28 to 36	37 to 45	46 to 54	55 to 63
1 team	X					
2 teams		X	X			
3 teams			X	X	X	
4 teams				X	X	X
5 teams					X	X
6 teams						X

Appendix B - Field Layout



Appendix C - Monthly Schedule

Conceptual on the training line; to be detailed by working group once the program is adopted.

June	July	August				September				October			
Training is initially focused on athletic development: movement, skills, agility, balance and coordination - including passing and handoffs. It then becomes more focused on speed, basic power and endurance including blocking and tackling.	No Football	Prep Aug 1-14	Game 1 Aug 15/16	Game 2 Aug 22/23	Game 3 Aug 29/30	Break #1 Sep 5/6	Game 4 Sep 12/13	Game 5 Sep 19/20	Game 6 Sep 26/27	Break #2 Oct 3/4	Game 7 Oct 10/11	Game 8 Oct 17/18	Game 9 Oct 24/25
		Athletic development, power, endurance, position and play development. Introduce (allow) a limited number of additional plays for Games 1-3.				Continue athletic development, power, endurance, position and play development. More positions for players. Introduce (allow) a limited number of additional plays for Games 4-6.				Continue athletic development, power, endurance, position and play development. More positions for players. Introduce (allow) a limited number of additional plays for Games 7-9.			
Learning the basic rules of the game		Review basic rules of the game, focus in context of the playbook (refresh after July break)	Ongoing Reinforcement of Rules										