

**Dear Volunteer Coach,**

Thank you for volunteering to coach for the SVUSD Department of Recreation & Community Services Flag Football League, “D” division. Coaching youth sports is one of the most valuable ways to serve your community. Your time and efforts over the next eight weeks will have a positive influence on the children you’re coaching.

The season begins with Orientation Day. You received a bag with your uniforms (t-shirts and shorts), picture information and schedules. Please distribute these to your players during the orientation. Parents will receive league information when they check in. If you have players that do not attend Orientation Day, **please call to introduce yourself and inform them of next week’s game time.**

This manual is intended as a guide to assist you with coaching for SVUSD. It will explain the league rules, policies, viewpoints and provide you with other helpful information. Please take the time to read this manual thoroughly. This will assist you to coaching a more fun, memorable and productive season!

**As a reminder, the emphasis of our program is not on winning.** Its goal is to teach skills, fundamentals and self-improvement while promoting good sportsmanship. Additionally, the league promotes a sense of commitment and responsibility in the child towards themselves, their coach and fellow players.

Thank you again for the time and effort you are giving to the program. Volunteering is an enjoyable and rewarding experience, and is an invaluable service to our community’s youth. If you have any questions about the information in this manual or the league, please don’t hesitate to call the Saddleback Sports Line at (949) 460-2731.

George Blair  
Flag Football League Director  
SVUSD Youth Sports

## GENERAL FLAG FOOTBALL INFORMATION: “D” Division

**Rain Outs:** Games cancelled due to inclement weather are made up at the end of the season. For cancellation information, please have your team call the Saddleback Sports Line at 460-2731, one hour prior to game time for updated program information. The message is only updated if games are cancelled.

**Playing Area:** “D” division plays on a field with dimensions of 60 yards by 30 yards, space permitting.

**Football Size:** “D” division uses a pee-wee size ball.

**Practices:** Practices are limited to the time provided to you on Saturdays.

**Picture Day:** Your picture time and day is listed on your schedule opposite of your name at the top of the schedule. All pictures will be taken at the field. Purchasing pictures are optional and are not included with the cost of the program.

**Eligible Players:** The only players eligible are those that are on your roster and have registered for the league with the Department of Recreation & Community Services. Our goal is to have twelve players on each team. If an opening on your team exists, the Saddleback Sports staff will inform you if a new player has been added. This rule is strictly enforced.

**Coach’s Conduct:** The Saddleback Valley Unified School District Department of Recreation & Community Services upholds strict standards of conduct. **Foul language, belligerent behavior and the antagonizing of players is not tolerated.** Punishment is limited to verbal quieting and/or playing time sanctions. **AT NO TIME WILL YOU ATTEMPT, THREATEN TO, OR PHYSICALLY STRIKE A PARTICIPANT!** This will call for an immediate suspension from further coaching duties.

**Website:** Visit our website for schedules, league updates and registration information. Go to [www.saddlebackrecreation.com](http://www.saddlebackrecreation.com). Click on “Youth Sports”, then on the “Flag Football” page. Scroll down to the “Documents” section to download your schedule.

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## GAME DAY PROCEDURES

The first 45 minutes of the program is designated for practice. The game field is shared by two teams. After the 45 minute practice, games will begin.

**Playing Time:** Games consist of four 10-minute running clock quarters with a substitution break every 5 minutes. Participants should play an equal amount of time.

**Players on the Field:** Teams have 8 players on the field. (If both teams do not have 8 eligible players, both teams should play with the same amount of players).

**Possessions:** There no punts or kick-offs. Each team will start with the ball on the 20 yard line. The offensive teams will have 4 offensive downs. At the end of the 4 downs or a score (no score is kept) the defensive team will take over possession of the ball.

**Positions:** Since this is an instructional league and most players first experience in football, please rotate players through each position.

**Coaches on the Field:** The “D” division is an instructional league. Coaches are asked to be on the field teaching fundamental skills and enforcing safety rules for all players. Coaches are expected to work in a cooperative manner in the best interest of the league and players to promote a fun and successful learning environment. **NO SCORE IS KEPT.** Please refrain from putting emphasis on winning.

## UNIFORMS

You received youth medium and youth large shirts and shorts. Our hope is that the uniforms given to you will fit all players. We realize this is not always the case. If a player on your team needs a larger or smaller uniform, please see a staff member on the field or call the Saddleback Sports Line at 460-2731.

## COMMON INFRACTIONS

Flag football is a safe alternative to tackle football where fundamental skills, strategies and concepts can be taught without risking major injuries. All penalties have been written with the safety of the participants as the priority. **Please enforce safety precautions at all times.**

Penalties should be called for the purpose of instructing the players on the rules of the game. If a penalty is committed, explain to the player why the infraction occurred. However, do not let excessive penalty calls hinder the flow of the game.

Common penalties in the “D” division are:

**Blocking:** OFFENSIVE blockers may use only the standing block, with the forearms and hands folded in against the chest. Any extension of the arms is an unsafe block and is an infraction. DEFENSIVE players are restrained in the use of hands to pushing the shoulders and body of offensive blockers. Slapping or striking is not allowed.

**Charging:** The ball carrier may not run through a defensive player, but must attempt to evade the defensive players. The defensive players must not hold nor run into the ball carrier or attempt to dislodge the ball. **DEFENSIVE PLAYERS MUST ATTEMPT TO PLAY THE FLAG AT ALL TIMES.**

**Tripping:** Tripping is the use of the lower leg or foot to obstruct the forward progress of an opponent including the runner.

**Holding:** Impeding the progress of an opponent by using hands, arms or any part of the body.

**Diving/Hurdling:** A player may not leave their feet to create an unsafe condition.

**Clipping:** Clipping is running into, diving into, pushing or blocking a player from behind.

**Flag Guarding:** Flag guarding occurs when a ball carrier intentionally attempts to avoid having his/her flag pulled by slapping at or blocking a defensive players hand when attempting to grab the ball carriers flag.

**Direct run by the quarterback:** The player taking the snap from the center is considered the quarterback and is not allowed to directly advance the ball down field without first exchanging the ball with another player. After an exchange the quarterback is allowed to get the ball back and then advance the ball down field.

## SPORTSMANSHIP

The Saddleback Sports Department strongly supports positive sportsmanship and conduct. Positive sportsmanship not only builds great team unity, it also teaches our youth to have respect for one another. It is our duty, as coaches, to teach positive sportsmanship values to our young players so that they may bring these values to “life after sports”. It is recommended that coaches review the Great Sportsmanship Examples, listed on the next page, with their players prior to the start of the season. You may add any other great sportsmanship examples that you deem proper.

## AWARDS

**Trophies:** All players in the “D” division receive trophies.

**Awards Certificate Program:** As an enhancement to your coaching tools, we have added an awards program to our coach’s kit. These award certificates have been included with this folder.

Part of being a successful coach is creating a positive and nurturing environment for the children on your team where they feel encouraged to do their best. One way of establishing this environment is by reinforcing their efforts through a rewards program.

Coaches may consider selecting a parent volunteer to be a “Player Award” scout before each game. Another option is to assign a *different* parent to be the “Player Award” scout before each game to get more parents involved in a positive manner.

You have been provided with twelve awards certificates for you to use throughout the season. These certificates can be used for a variety of different awards from “Best Listener” to “Great Sportsmanship.” You can use the awards to recognize the players’ efforts not only in the game, but in practice too. Please be sure that each player on your team gets recognized at least once during season.

### Awards Certificate Examples

- Best listener
- Teamwork
- Effort (defense/offense)
- Leadership
- Excellence in \_\_\_\_\_
- Hustle
- Sportsmanship
- Attitude

### Great Sportsmanship Examples

- Offers encouragement to other teammates
- Cheers good play, no matter who makes it
- Plays fair and by the rules
- Cheers teammates on from the sidelines
- Listens and follows the coach’s instructions
- Shows leadership qualities
- Encourages teammates who make mistakes
- Leads by actions, not words
- Accepts judgment calls of officials and coaches
- Helps pick up water bottles and trash

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Allowing parents to help with their kids' sporting activities will have a positive influence on our children. We encourage coaches to provide parents the opportunity to volunteer. You have already made a great commitment to your team by volunteering to coach. A lot goes into a fun and enjoyable season and it is unreasonable to expect the coach to manage everything. Ask the parents for assistance, you might be surprised to discover how many are willing to help. Please remember that these are only suggestions and are not required by the league.

### **Example Volunteer Responsibilities**

- assistant coaching
- monitoring the players during game time
- making phone calls to the team
- organizing picture day
- making a snack list
- getting names and numbers on the uniforms
- planning a team party
- being responsible for the team's "Awards Certificate Program"

## **THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE**

- Keep the safety and the well being of players your first priority.
- Educate players in the ways of good sportsmanship and teamwork; and to display these values with positive behavior.
- Remember that you are a role model through your words, actions, and leadership.
- Always play fair and by the rules.
- Always exhibit friendly and respectful manners towards opposing teams.
- Always be positive and praise good play and effort.
- Always encourage players to strive for individual improvement.
- Keep expectations reasonable and age appropriate.
- Never criticize players in a demoralizing way through words, body language or any other means.
- Be committed to your team and the program by arriving on time to each game and practice.
- Take just a few minutes and create a simple practice plan prior to arriving at the field.

**NEVER FORGET ... IT'S JUST A GAME AND GAMES ARE MEANT TO BE FUN!!!**

## **Noticing Progress: The Key to Keeping Kids in Youth Sports** *by Dr. Darrell J. Burnett*

*"What's the use in trying? No matter what I do, it'll never be enough! My coach is never satisfied. My parents are never satisfied. I can't compete against other kids who are so much better than I am."*

-- 9-year old boy who dropped out of organized sports.

Research (Jeziorski, 1994) has shown that kids who stay in sports tend to stay in school, get better grades and show better behaviors. It makes sense then, for us to know something about what it takes to motivate kids to keep playing sports once they've started. Two of the obstacles in motivating kids to continue playing sports are mentioned in the quote from the 9-year-old: 1) unrealistic expectations from coaches and parents; and 2) unrealistic self-comparison with other athletes.

### **Unrealistic Expectations From Coaches and Parents**

Time and again I see kids who have lost their initial joy in sports because they are preoccupied with feeling that they have somehow let their coach or parents down by not living up to adult expectations. Coaches and parents, especially those with kids at the younger levels, not attuned to the developmental level of a kid may inadvertently expect something from a kid which is not physically or emotionally possible, given the muscle coordination, attention span or level of dedication at a specific age level. The kid then struggles to live up to the expectations of coaches or parents, sees no progress and eventually gives up or quits, feeling like a failure in the eyes of adults. I saw a 10-year-old boy in my office, referred by his father, who wanted me to "motivate" him. The boy broke into tears, relating how he used to love baseball but had grown sick of it because his dad had made him take 200 swings a day off the batting tee in his backyard, seven days a week. He said he had wanted to spend time with his buddies, but his dad had told him this was the only way to get to the big leagues! The boy eventually quit baseball, feeling that he had failed his dad.

### **Unrealistic Self-comparison with Other Athletes**

Besides feeling unable to live up to unrealistic adult expectations, kids will often fall victim to making unrealistic comparisons between themselves and other athletes. After the initial novelty of the sport wears off, kids begin looking around at other kids and start comparing their skills to their peers. ("I can't run as fast, throw as hard, shoot as straight, hit as hard, swing as smoothly, skate as smoothly, etc. as the other kids!") The danger is that the fun of the sport disappears, confidence disappears and the kid sees himself/herself as unable to compete against teammates (peers, siblings, etc.) whose skills seem more advanced. Eventually, seeing no progress and feeling like a loser, the kid quits.

### **Progress: Competing Against Yourself**

A key to keeping kids in sports then, is to get them 1) to stop the unrealistic comparisons with other athletes and the preoccupation with competing against others, and 2) to stop the preoccupation with not living up to coaches' and parents' unrealistic expectations. One major way to accomplish this is to get kids to start competing against themselves, with realistic goals. That way, each kid concentrates on his or her personal best, rather than making constant comparisons with others (peers, siblings, etc.) Also, if coaches and parents work together with the child to notice progress in reaching those goals, the problem of adult unrealistic expectations will be removed.

## Measuring Progress: Frequency, Duration and Intensity

Progress is defined as movement toward a goal. Progress is any movement, no matter how small, toward any goal, no matter how small. If a coach or parent can help a kid notice and measure continued progress toward a goal, there's a good chance the kid will be motivated to remain in sports. Progress can be measured in terms of frequency, duration and intensity. Frequency measures how often a desired behavior occurs (one foul shot, tackle, hit, shot on goal, spike, ace, save, pass, rebound, interception, etc., compared to none in a previous game or practice), or how seldom an undesired behavior occurs (one missed foul shot, missed tackle, strike out, missed shot on goal, out-of-bounds spike, missed serve, failure to box out, etc., compared to two in a previous game or practice.) Duration measures how long a desired behavior lasts (two consecutive foul shots, tackles, hits, shots on goal, spikes, aces, saves, passes, rebounds, interceptions, longer periods without mistake, etc.) I know one creative coach who praised his T-Ball right fielder for staying in position for three consecutive batters before chasing a butterfly! That was progress! Progress in duration can also be measured by how short an undesired behavior lasts (shorter pouting period after making a mistake, shorter temper tantrum after a questionable call by a referee, etc.) Intensity measures the amount of energy, focus and enthusiasm expended (hustle on and off the field, court or rink, hustle on every play during the game; hustle after a loose ball or puck; hustle up and down the field, court or rink; chatter from the sidelines or in the game; yelling encouragement to teammates; focus and awareness of time clock, score, etc.) Some players who lack skills may continue to play if they see that they're making a contribution to the team by their energetic enthusiasm, determination and focus (that's what the movie "Rudy" was all about.)

### Process vs. End Product

Sports psychologist Dr. Tom Tutko and others have made the point that kids are more concerned with the process of play than with the end product. They seem to enjoy the joy of simply participating in a sport. This is in contrast to adults who seem preoccupied with the end product. It is rare to hear coaches or parents praise a kid just for participating in a sport. Praise is usually reserved for a specific skill shown by a kid, not for simply being there. After a game, adults ask questions like, "Who won? Who scored?" Kids ask questions like, "Who was there?" "How were the snacks?" In an effort to keep kids in sports, coaches and parents would do well to capitalize on kids' tendency toward "process," and get them to see their continued progress as a process of learning skill, learning the rules of the game and learning how to handle victory and defeat. Motivational sports psychologists have shown that kids who focus on their progress in learning tasks in athletics stay in sports longer than kids who are preoccupied with measuring their worth as an athlete only in terms of winning. In other words, if a kid is preoccupied with winning, as long as they are on a winning team, they continue playing. But, if a team has a losing season, the kid may drop out of the sport. In contrast, the kid who focuses on his/her progress in improving mechanics and skills is more likely to stay in sports regardless of the won-loss record. None of us is so naïve as to think that keeping a child in sports is the answer to all life's problems. However, the lessons learned (self discipline, time management, decision making, problem solving, sportsmanship, team work, handling disappointment, etc.) have a definite carryover to everyday life. And, if a child learns to stay motivated by keeping tabs on his/her progress in reaching small goals in each sport, that's a great habit to develop for life after sports.

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Dr. Darrell Burnett is a clinical psychologist and a certified sports psychologist specializing in Youth Sports. He has been in private practice in Laguna Niguel, California for 20+ years. His book, **IT'S JUST A GAME!** (Youth, Sports, & Self Esteem: A Guide for Parents), is described at his website, [www.djburnett.com](http://www.djburnett.com), along with his other books, booklets, and audio cassettes on Youth Sports and family life.

# Practice Your **PASS!**

Planning + Application = Successful Season!

Since there are only 45 minutes of practice allowed each week, it would be helpful to have practices properly planned for. Also, please take into consideration that it takes some time to get players properly lined up for each drill. Planning for practices in advance will allow your team to utilize the entire hour more productively. On the next page, you will find a sample Coach's Practice Planner. Please make copies for your personal use in future practices. Applying pre-planned practice drills will lead your team to a more successful and productive season. Think **PASS!**

Remember that kids tend to have a short attention span and get bored of running the same drill for more than 5 -10 minutes. We suggest you pick 4-6 basic drills to use during the season to teach fundamental skills. Enhance your practices with creative games to reinforce those skill and to make practices fun. The following are fundamental skills recommended to focus on.

- Warm-ups/Exercises
- Safety
- Blocking
- Flag Pulling
- Conditioning
- Foot Speed
- Catching
- Throwing
- Kicking
- Teamwork
- Offence positions
- Defense positions
- Safety rules
- League rules