

# WIDESIDE

*The Official Newsletter of Football Alberta*



## Inside this issue:

<a href="#">Football Canada Cup</a>	<a href="#">2-3</a>
<a href="#">FC U16 Western Challenge</a>	<a href="#">4-5</a>
<a href="#">Team Canada All-Stars</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Team Alberta U17 Hawaii</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">FC U16 Flag Regionals</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">U16 Coach Application</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Minor Provincials Schedule</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">ASAA High School Playoffs</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">In Defense of Football</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Scholarship Winners</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Memberships &amp; Insurance</a>	<a href="#">18</a>

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## Team Alberta Programs

2017 was the busiest summer for Team Alberta programs with a total of 4 teams competing in tournaments from Coast to Coast. Football Alberta's flagship team the U18 team participated in the Football Canada Cup, Alberta hosted the Football Canada U16 Western Challenge and Alberta also sent Boys and Girls U16 teams to the Football Canada Flag Regionals.

At the Football Canada Cup in Wolfville, Nova Scotia July 8-14, the U18 Alberta team won their opening game against Manitoba but lost a heartbreaking game to Quebec in the semi-finals. They ended up finishing 4th after a loss to Ontario in the Bronze medal game.

At the inaugural Football Canada U16 Western Challenge in Lethbridge July 2-8, Alberta dominated to win the Gold Medal. In the 3 games they outscored South Saskatchewan, Manitoba and BC 114-3.

For the first time Alberta sent two U16 Flag Teams to the Football Canada Flag Regionals in Vancouver August 10-13. Despite a slow start adapting to the Flag game, the Alberta Boys finished 3rd place out of 7 and the Girls Team was 5th.



## Football Canada Cup 2017 Results - Wolfville, Nova Scotia

### Quarter Final - July 8th Alberta 36 Manitoba 10

Alberta kicked off the 2017 Football Canada Cup in Wolfville, Nova Scotia with a 36-10 win over Manitoba.

Quarterback Jonathan Ericson connected with Segun Adeseye for a 10 yard touchdown reception to open the scoring in the first quarter. Matthew Peterson would tally two consecutive majors for Alberta. His first was a seven yard rushing touchdown and the other was a 17 yard rushing major.

Defence came up with a major play in the second quarter when Zayden Velasco caught an interception and converted it into a 43 yard touchdown. At halftime, Alberta enjoyed a 28-0 lead over Manitoba. Only 13 seconds into the second half, Jacob Biggs returned a kickoff all the way down to the end zone for an 85 yard major for Alberta. Overall, Alberta's defence had five interceptions in the game.

Alberta's Players of the Game were Jonathan Ericson (offence) and Zayden Velasco (defence). Alberta Head Coach Chris Morris after the game, "We did really well in the first half, we took care of all the little things we wanted to. There was a little bit of a bump in the second half. We didn't take care of the last quarter like we wanted to."

### Semi Final - July 11th Quebec 13 Alberta 12

In the semi-final Alberta was on the verge of pulling off an upset at the 2017 Football Canada Cup in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. Heading into the final minute of the game, Alberta clung onto a 12-10 lead over defending champions and top seed Quebec. With 15 seconds left, Alberta's chance to play for gold was dashed when Antoine Couture came though in a clutch performance and booted a nine yard field goal to propel Quebec to a 13-12 victory.

In the first half, offensive production was hard to come by for both teams and they were scoreless after one quarter of play. Early in the second quarter, Jake Withrow added a 25 yard field goal to give Alberta the lead. Less than two minutes later, his attempt at a second field goal went wide and out of the end zone. At halftime, Alberta led Quebec 4-3.

Jonathan Ericson connected with Segun Adeseye for a 23 yard touchdown in the third quarter. Just over a minute and 22 seconds later, Quebec responded back as quarterback Lukas Boulanger snuck into the end zone for a 1 yard touchdown to keep pace with Alberta. Alberta managed to get a single in the final minute of the game to go up by two points.



However it was short-lived as Couture's precision in those last 15 seconds of the game secured Quebec's berth in the gold medal game.

Quebec felt very fortunate to escape with the victory. As for Alberta, the team was disappointed about how close they were to winning the game and how their chance to play for gold slipped away. "I'm just super proud of the kids that played their hearts out," Alberta Head Coach Chris Morris expressed. "It's really unfortunate that it came down to a couple of plays; they made a couple of plays and that's what happens when you play against good teams."

Alberta Players of the Game were RB Matthew Peterson (offence) and DB Jacob Biggs (defence).

## Football Canada Cup 2017 Results - Wolfville, Nova Scotia

### Bronze Medal Game - July 14th Ontario 34 Alberta 29

In the final game of the tournament, Alberta lost the bronze medal game to Ontario 34-29. It was a slow start for both teams with Ontario leading 6-0 after the first quarter thanks to two field goals. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter Alberta got on the board with two Jake Withrow field goals of their own.

Ontario scored the first touchdown of the game on a 75 yard reception by Justin Pope. Alberta answered back with a long touchdown of their own with Quarterback Jonathan Ericson hooking up with wide receiver Segun Adeseye for a 39 yard touchdown. With the missed extra point it was 13-12 Ontario at the half. Halfway through the third quarter, pivot Ethan Martin added a major to extend Ontario's lead. Ontario put some distance between them and Alberta when Keon Edwards plunges into the end zone for a touchdown. Then the defence got on the board when Max Nixon caught an interception and ran down the field for a score. Alberta tried to rally late in the game with touchdowns by Tyson Rowe and Dakota McKay, however the comeback fell just short. Final score 34-29.

Coach Chris Morris after the game "We weren't ready to start the game, They got a little bit of momentum on us. We kept fighting – this group of kids especially will just fight and fight and fight. They fought all the way to the end and just kept competing and that's all you can be really proud of."

Players of the Game for were Jake Withrow (offence) and Lamar Goods (defence).



## Football Canada U16 Western Challenge - Lethbridge, Alberta

The first ever Western Canada U16 Challenge was held in Lethbridge, AB from July 1 – 8 this past summer. The concept is to use this event as a prelude to higher events such as the Football Canada Cup for athletes at the beginning of their elite competitive years. It was also used to select a Western Canada U16 All-Star Team to compete in the International Bowl this upcoming January in Texas. Here are the results of Alberta's games:

### Game #1: July 2nd Alberta 48 Saskatchewan 3

Hosts Alberta got on the scoreboard 1:28 into the game as quarterback Eli Hetlinger from Harry Ainlay, Edmonton found Ajou Ajou from Brooks for a 32 yard touchdown reception. Saskatchewan responded back with Jackson Milton Owen's 18 yard field goal to get within four points of the lead. With 38 seconds left in the first quarter, Ainlay's Jaxon Hume sprinted into the end zone to score a 51 yard touchdown to extend Alberta's lead.

Alberta continued their momentum in the second quarter when Ajou Ajou tallied his second major of the game – a 57 yard rush. Claresholm's Ethan Perry dashed into the end zone for a 16 yard touchdown to strengthen Alberta's lead. At halftime, Alberta led Saskatchewan 38-3.

In the second half, there was not a lot of scoring but Alberta continued to find ways to put up points. Charlie DeLand of St. Francis, Calgary was successful on a 13 yard field goal. Perry's second touchdown of the day rounded out Alberta's scoring. His score was a 34 yard touchdown.

Offensive Players of the Game were Ryker Frank (Saskatchewan) and Ajou (Alberta). Furthermore, Defensive Players of the Game were Parker Schmaltz (Saskatchewan) and Carson Remus (Alberta).

### Game #2: July 5th Alberta 38 Manitoba 0

The second game for Alberta at the Western U16 Challenge was a battle of the undefeated as Manitoba had defeated B.C. in their first game. The stars of the show were the Harry Ainlay connection of Quarterback Eli Hetlinger and receiver Jaxon Hume on as they connected three times for touchdown receptions in the first half for host Alberta. Jaden Casten also tallied a 79 yard rushing major while Charlie DeLand added 17 and 16 yard field goals. At halftime, Alberta led Manitoba 31-0.

Lloydminster's Matthew Morin had the only other score of the game for Alberta when he rushed into the end zone for a 23 yard touchdown in the fourth quarter.

Offensive Players of the Game were Carter Kutzan (Manitoba) and Hume (Alberta). Defensive Players of the Game were Isaac Dokken (Manitoba) and Kosta Zannis (Alberta). Unfortunately for Zannis this would be his last participation in the event as the next day a gopher hole would end the tournament with a twisted ankle for the Crescent Heights linebacker.



## Football Canada U16 Western Challenge - Lethbridge, Alberta

### Game #3: July 8th Alberta 28 BC 0

Alberta finished the sweep of the competition with a 28-0 shutout of British Columbia.

Ajou Ajou scored two touchdowns in the first half to guide Alberta to the victory. On the last play of the first quarter, Ajou sprinted into the end zone for an 18 yard touchdown. With six seconds left in the first half, quarterback Eli Hetlinger connected with Ajou for a 12 yard major. At halftime, Alberta led British Columbia 14-0.

In the third quarter, Kolby Hurford from Salisbury in Sherwood Park added a 23 yard touchdown for Alberta and that rounded out the schedule for Alberta and sealed the Gold Medal.

Players of the Game for Alberta were REC Ajou (offence) and DL Adrian Minakata-Mata from St. Francis in Calgary (defence). British Columbia Players of the Game were RB Christian Carlon Diaz (offence) and LB Jude Buchanan (defence).



## Football Canada Cup All Stars

Congratulations to the 7 Alberta players who were selected to the Football Canada Cup All-Star Roster



## U16 Team Canada West All Stars

### Western All-Stars:

Alberta placed 19 players out of 40 on the Western Canada All-Star Team that will travel to Texas in January 2018 to represent their country vs. Team USA at the International Bowl.

This will be the first year regional representative teams will take on USA Football in the International Bowl. Previous to this Provinces could send teams on their own at the U16 or lower levels. Alberta participated at the U16 level in 2015, 2016 and this past January going 2-1 over those three events. Another Albertan who will be making the trip will be the newly appointed Head Coach of the Football Canada U16 Western All-Stars, Darcy Park from Edmonton. Darcy served as the head coach of Team Alberta this past July and won the right to be the head coach of the Western All-Stars as a result of his teams Gold Medal performance. Darcy also currently serves as the head coach of the Edmonton Wildcats of the PFC. He will be joined by another Albertan to be named later as the rest of the coaching staff will be filled in by one other coach from Alberta and two each from the other provinces in the West.

#### Quarterback

Eli Hetlinger (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)

#### Runningback

Jaden Caston (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)

#### Receiver

Ajou Ajou (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)

Sony Bermudez-Chavez (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)

Jaxon Hume (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)

Kolby Hurford (Salisbury, Sherwood Park)

#### Offensive Line

Sam Carson (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)

Albert Reese (Strathcona, Edmonton)

Evan Selzler (Archbishop Jordan, Sherwood Park)

Navarone Watchmaker (Bonnyville)

#### Defensive Line

Adrian Minakata-Mata (St. Francis, Calgary)

Jacob Yahaya (St. Francis, Calgary)

#### Linebacker

Simon King (St. Francis, Calgary)

Carson Remus (Foothills, Okotoks)

Kosta Zannis (Crescent Heights, Calgary)

#### Defensive Backs

Charlie DeLand (St. Francis, Calgary)

Jackson Ganton (St. Albert)

Jordan Innes (Ernest Manning, Calgary)

Sheldon McNabb (Salisbury, Sherwood Park)

## Team Alberta U17 Hawaii Camp

The inaugural Team Alberta U17 program picked up where the old Team Alberta Hawaii camp left off and experienced a great week of football and training in Maui this past August 5-12. Selected out of the Team Alberta U18 program 38 players got one week of training the three scrimmages against Maui based high schools. The intent of Team Alberta U17 is to give the next wave of eligible players for next year's Team Alberta U18 more training and education on the specifics of travel, time zone change, and dealing with unfamiliar territory.

The team arrived on Maui on August 5 and began two a days the following day. Alberta's first hosted scrimmage was at King Kamehameha High School in Pukalani on August 8. The Warriors were very welcoming and showed great passion to their craft. The scrimmage resulted in a 2-2 draw in terms of touchdowns scored. On August 9, Team Alberta travelled to Baldwin High School in Wailuku where they were hosted at one of Hawaii's largest high schools. The Bears were very hospitable as well and spent lots of time interacting with Team Alberta through one on one and skelly/inside drills prior to the scrimmage. Alberta scored twice to the Bears single TD in the scrimmage. The final stop along the way was Seabury Hall which not only hosted Team Alberta on-field but provided a beautiful buffet lunch afterwards. During the scrimmage Alberta scored twice and held the Spartans scoreless.

Special thanks go out to the County of Maui for allowing us the use of Kilohana Field for training purposes and all three high schools and their coaches, Ulima Afoa (King Kamehameha), Thomas Lee (Baldwin) and David Carino (Seabury Hall) for their wonderful hospitality and demonstration of the warrior spirit and is so much a part of the culture of Hawaiian football.



## Football Canada U16 Flag Regionals - Vancouver, BC

Football Alberta partnered with Edmonton Junior High School Athletics to create our first two U16 Flag Football teams. Alberta sent a U16 Boys and U16 Girls teams to the Football U16 Flag Regionals in Vancouver August 10-13. The teams were made up of Junior High flag players from Edmonton.

### Alberta Takes Home Bronze

The Alberta U16 Boys participated in a seven teams tournament at the Football Canada Regionals. The other teams participating were BC (2), Saskatchewan (2), Manitoba and Nova Scotia.

After 4 games Alberta was 1-3 with loses to a Saskatchewan team and both BC teams. A lot of the players were playing together for the first time and were still learning the flag game so it took time to adjust to the rules and new teammates. It was a 6 game round robin and Alberta was faced with 2 must win games to make the playoffs.

Led by Quarterback Eli Hetlinger and Receiver Sony Bermudez Chavez

Alberta was able to beat Saskatchewan in Game #5 and had a thrilling last second come from behind 38-37 win over Manitoba to clinch 3rd place in the Round Robin.

Alberta was getting better every game they played together and it was starting to show. In the semi-finals they were beat by a clearly most experienced and skilled Vancouver team sending them into a rematch with Manitoba. The Bronze medal game lived up to the hype of their round robin match with Alberta pulling away late to win 33-18.



### Alberta Girls Finish 5th

The Alberta U16 Girls finished winless in a 5 team Round Robin against 2 teams from each Saskatchewan and Quebec.

In their lone playoff game, Alberta played Saskatchewan extremely tough and held them off the scoreboard for 3 quarters of the game. Saskatchewan scored 2 late touchdowns to eliminate Alberta from the playoffs.

It was the first time in Alberta has sent a U16 Girls teams to a Football Canada event and the 8 girls and 3 coaches never gave up during the tournament and made Alberta proud.

# Invitation for Application

**TO: All Alberta Football Coaches**  
**FROM: Taylor Stiles, Technical Director – Football Alberta**  
**RE: U16 Team Alberta Provincial Team Program 2017-2019**

Attached you will find an application to become a part of the coaching staff for the U16 Alberta Provincial Team Program for the next three years.

The U16 team will be selected via two identification camps in February and April followed by a main selection camp in April. (Note: this may change under the direction of the new head coach but for now it is the template). The new coaching staff will be expected to fulfill a three year commitment to their respective team.

Please read the following for important information prior to applying for any of the available positions.

- **Time Commitment:** There is an expectation of one weekend in February, two weekends in April, and a 7 day commitment in July with the possibility of an extra mini-camp in June.
- **How will the Team Selection Work:** 2 identification camps will be held to short list all 2003 and 2004 players in Alberta down to the Top 80 players. For 2018 the ID camps will be hosted February 9-11 in Edmonton and April 4-6 in Calgary. The final selection camp will be held April 20-22 in Calgary.
- **What is the Football Canada Western Challenge:** The FCWC is a tournament against the 3 Western provincial teams. In 2018 Alberta will have a training camp July 1-3 and play BC on July 4<sup>th</sup> in the semi-final game. Practice days will be held on July 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Alberta will play for gold or bronze on July 7<sup>th</sup> vs. Manitoba or Saskatchewan.
- **Qualifications:** Must take the NCCP Introduction to Competition, Safe Contact, Making Headway and Making Ethical Decisions Online prior to the FCWC.
- **Who is making the decisions:** A Provincial Team Selection Committee (PTSC) made up of members of the Board of Directors and staff of Football Alberta has been struck and it will be their goal to finalize the selections for each team.
- **Coaching Selection Timelines:** All applications are required to be into the Football Alberta office by ***Friday October 14, 2017***. The committee will shortlist head coaching candidates for interview in November. Once selected the Head Coach of the U16 team will fill out the other six or seven positions on staff from the pool of applications for assistant coaches with the help of the PTSC. Note that it is our hope that the staff will have an equal number of coaches from North and South Alberta as well as no more than four coaches from either Calgary or Metro Edmonton and no more than two coaches from any current staff on each team – ***however*** that is all dependent on the strength and number of applications. Final coaching rosters should be finalized by the December Football Alberta Planning meetings.

For more information please contact Taylor Stiles at 780.644.2731 or [techdirector@footballalberta.ab.ca](mailto:techdirector@footballalberta.ab.ca)

**[Click here for further information and the full Application Form](#)**

## 2017 Football Alberta Minor Provincials

### BANTAM

#### SEMI-FINALS - Saturday, November 11

##### Tier I

Capital District "A" at Calgary A"  
Calgary "A2" at Southern Alberta "A"

##### Tier II

Central Alberta "A" at Capital District "B"  
Calgary "B" at Rangeland "A"

##### Tier III

Wheatland "A" at Grande Prairie "A"  
Central Alberta "B" at Southern Alberta "B"

#### FINALS - Saturday, November 18

Tier I - winner Calgary "A2" / Southern "A" hosts

Tier II - winner Central "A" / Capital Dist. "B" hosts

Tier III - winner Wheatland "A" / GP "A" hosts

### PEE-WEE

#### Finals - Saturday, November 11

##### Tier I

Capital District "A" at Calgary "A"

##### Tier II

Capital District "B" at Calgary "B"

##### Tier III

Central Alberta "A" at Lloydminster "A"

**Note:** "A" indicates a leagues 1st place team  
"A2" indicates a leagues 2nd place team  
"B" indicates a league 5th place team  
"B2" indicates a leagues 6th place team

## 2017 Football Alberta Schools' Athletic Association

The Alberta Schools Athletic Association (ASAA) will be hosting the 9th Alberta Bowl, where all four Tier finals and 6 Man final will be played at the same venue. The finals will take place on November 24th and 25th in Lacombe. Please see flow chart on the next page for more details, and watch the ASAA website ([www.asaa.ca](http://www.asaa.ca)) for updates.



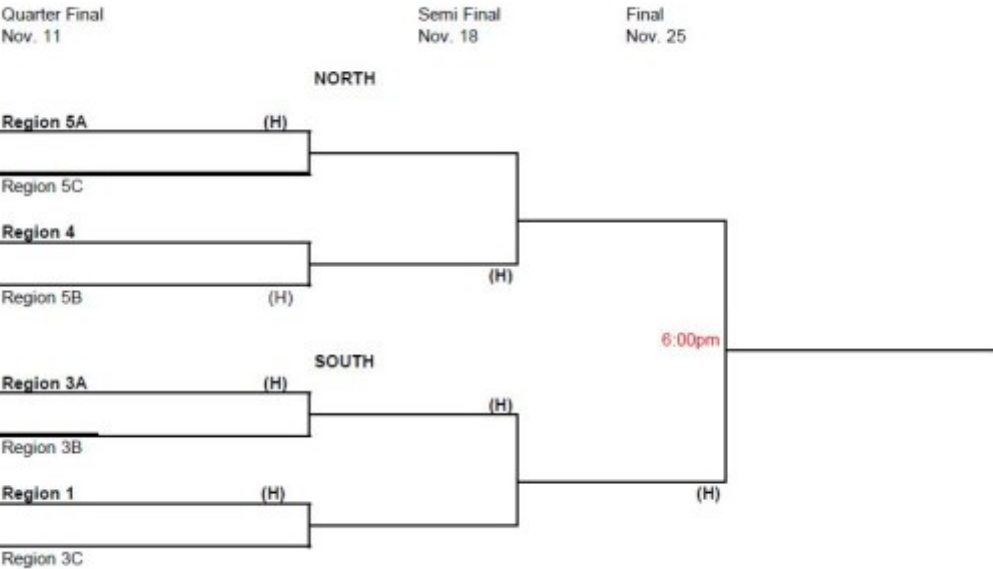
Quarterfinal Games: November 11th  
Semi Final Games: November 17th  
Alberta Bowl: November 24th  
- Tier III and 6 Man  
November 25th  
- Tiers I, II & IV

Defined regions in the province are :

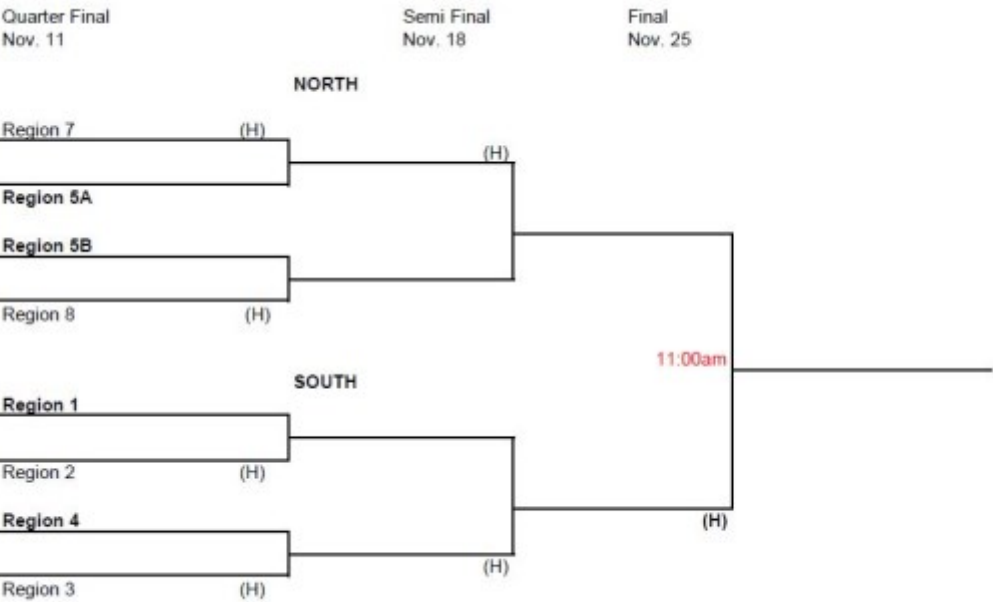
Region 1 - South & Rangeland  
Region 2 - Big Sky, Rocky View & Big Rock  
Region 3 - Calgary  
Region 4 - Central  
Region 5 - Edmonton Metro  
Region 6 - Wheatland & Fort McMurray  
Region 7 - Mighty Peace

# 2017 High School Provincials Playoff Schedule

## TIER I



## TIER II



\*Region 2 to determine single berth between Rockyview and Big Rock



# 2017 High School Provincials Playoff Schedule

## TIER III



Regions 1 and 2 to determine their representatives

## TIER IV



Regions 1 and 2 to determine their representatives

\*Region 2B rep to be determined in playoff game between Big Rock (H) and Big Sky one week prior to the quarter finals

## 6 MAN



\*Higher Seed hosts

## In Defense of Football

The continuous attack on the game of football continues as of this writing. No one is saying that the efforts to make the sport as safe as possible shouldn't continue, however with all of the other contact sports seemingly getting a pass from media and parents alike its time for a reality check. First, we'd like you to check this video from former B.C. Lion Angus Reid out on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go1-okBq3LU>

Then we'd like you to read the article below taken from the American Greatness website (<https://amgreatness.com/2017/07/30/defense-americas-game/>) by former Marine G. David Bednar who graduated from Harvard with a B.A. in 1987 and an MBA in 1994. He served as an officer in the United States Marine Corps from 1987-1991 and served in Operation Desert Storm. He works in finance in New York City. He makes a very compelling argument and cites facts every football coach should know:

### In Defense of America's Game

Every autumn, 4 million boys continue a tradition they share with their fathers, grandfathers and leather clad players of old. Football's unique character and preeminent appeal make it America's game. Yet today football is under assault, with player safety the stated motivation. Fans fear and detractors hope the game faces an existential crisis. A law to ban football would never pass. The game's demise, if it comes, will arrive in the great American tradition of all killjoys: the surreptitious executioners of a malign media campaign and the pestilence of lawsuits. The verdict of the few imposed on the many.

America would be the worse if football is diminished or eliminated. Football's ethos is distinct, strong and important to our country. The opposition to the game is really a conflict about this ethos, a skirmish in a wider clash of ideas.

### Uniquely Dangerous?

All sports can be dangerous but the incessant message confronting Americans is that football is uniquely dangerous. This claim, focused on brain injury, is the core argument against the game. But is football uniquely dangerous? For the overwhelming majority of players, youth, high school and college, this appears false.

A 2010 Mayo Clinic study, updated in 2016, found no increase in risk of degenerative brain disease for high school football players versus other varsity sports. The study's authors remarked, "the risk of high school football players developing degenerative neurological diseases later in life is no greater than if they had been in the band, glee club or choir."

A 2015 NCAA study found that concussion rates in college ice hockey and women's soccer exceeded that of football; and wrestling had a concussion rate twice that of football. A 2017 University of Iowa study found that flag football, with no helmets or tackling, caused more concussions than the full contact game. Trampolines and girls gymnastics send a dramatically higher proportion of 5-14 year olds to the emergency room with serious injuries. A University of North Carolina Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research found that between 2002 and 2012 football accounted for 3.8 deaths annually.

Amusement park rides caused more deaths; weightlifting almost twice as many; mountain climbing six times as many; horseback riding 25 times as many; bicycle riding 170 times as many; and swimming 875 times as many. Twelve times more Americans die annually from lightning strikes than playing football. In fact, the average American football player would appear to have a higher likelihood of being struck by lightning than suffering from chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), the most serious disease found in former professional players.

Yet many parents, misled by headlines, believe participation in football means playing roulette with their sons' brains. Even the cheerleaders on the sidelines of high school football games have a greater risk of "catastrophic injury."

### Science-as-Bludgeon

In a dissonant age, when every dispute comes furnished with "studies" that prove all sides, resorting to lived experience and common sense seem essential to find the truth. I played football for eight years during high school and college. I had hundreds of teammates, and both programs have had thousands of players since. I am not aware, nor does either program have a record, of a degenerative brain injury or death related to playing football. We know countless fathers, brothers and friends whose years in the game left them only with indelible memories.

## In Defense of Football Cont.

Here is an inconsistency. Where is the incessant editorial concern for young female gymnasts, wrestlers, and hockey players? The call to ban trampolines and cheerleading? The repeated headlines about the concussion crisis in women's soccer?

The media reaction to a recent Boston University study showing a high proportion of CTE in the brains of a non-random, self-selected sample of former players heightens suspicion. The doctor leading the study admitted "all the players in this study, on some level, were symptomatic. That leaves you with a very skewed population" and that no conclusions about CTE can be drawn.

A review of current scientific research on CTE makes nothing so clear as its infancy. Dr. Lili-Naz Hazrati, a brain pathologist at the University of Toronto, said of the Boston University research, "The problem is that these findings are being put out there too fast, and stated too strongly, by one group, before we understand who gets CTE, how it evolves over time, what's the risk—any of that." The American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology, an organization of brain injury specialists, felt the need to issue a statement to point out that CTE science "is still unsettled and evidence to date should not be interpreted to mean that parents must keep their children off sports teams." Despite this, major media reports used the study to scourge bloodthirsty fans and call for the banning of football at all levels. One thing is as clear as CTE science is unclear: nothing in this or any research justifies the banning of football.

Every effort to make the game safer is welcome and recent steps have done so at every level. But in the football debate, as in others, "settled science" should not become the bludgeon of a mandated truth. Further, defending football with dueling safety studies fails to acknowledge the actual motivations of its opponents, and wages the debate on ground of their choosing.

### The Real Problem with Football

Americans today are confronted with strident new orthodoxies. We need "safe spaces," "comfort zones," and must beware the macro hazard of "micro-aggression." "Silent" sports mitigate "harmful" competitive pressures from zealous parents and coaches who fail to understand that the command voice is an artifact. Association must be strictly coed and scrupulously secular. Physical contact of any kind is circumspect (when I coached AYSO, an official, four rule checklist detailed the approved method for hugging players) and "hitting" is a sinister act in every context.

Now we must adopt definitionally adverse group identities: male/female, black/white, gay/straight. Personal shortcoming and failure are the fault of societal, institutional flaws or enterprising medical diagnoses. Individual agency and accountability are diminished, and with them the integrity of individual achievement. A bonfire to victimhood has been lighted, drawing the powerless individual to its glow. Everyone gets a trophy.

A "football mindset" is spoken of, and it is different. The football field has a zone, but no comfort zone. Everyone yells—fans, players and coaches most of all. "Silent" football? Never. Football stubbornly survives the pressure of Title IX and defies progressive diktat requiring the eradication of any recognition of differences between the sexes. While the high school game welcomes the occasional female, football may be the last major activity in America that remains effectively all male.

Prayer and the Almighty seem like a part of the game. Football encourages and rewards hitting other people as hard as you can. To observe football is not to see adverse groups of races but individual black and white teammates, brothers, embracing in the joy of united struggle. Jack Kemp, the congressman and professional quarterback, was right when he said "the huddle is color-blind." Players have "assignments" every play. Failure results in your teammates paying a physical price. Perhaps this is why excuses are valueless currency on the football field. Football demands accountability and personal responsibility. There are no handouts, weakness hurts the team. The victim is a pariah on a football field. The laurels of the victor must be won before all.

Football's opponents are not driven by a concern for its players. Their problem with football is its sacrilege on the pantheon of progressive orthodoxy. The dispute about football is really a clash of Weltanschauungen: "helicopter parenting" and the "therapeutic society" meet the real world.

## In Defense of Football Cont.

### The School of Football

Football players celebrate the salubrity of being knocked on your ass. The game demands that you get back up. Here is a simple homage to courage, the “first” virtue of the ancients. While football is not alone in this, is there any sport that better instills fortitude, discipline and resolve?

Today, these traits may be perceived as secondary, even archaic, in a world where torpid tolerance is ascendant. But football’s virtues are not anachronisms. Requiring the precise coordination, under pressure, of a large group with widely varying speed, strength and skill, it may be the ultimate team sport. Consider who does America’s fighting. Our warfighters are not the brothers and sisters, daughters and sons, of footballs critics on the editorial staff of the New York Times. They are disproportionately former high school players from states that love football. Those who serve say that football helped prepare them. I know it did me. Oliver Wendell Holmes in his Soldier’s Faith address said, “I rejoice at every dangerous sport which I see pursued... In this snug, over-safe corner of the world we need it, that we may realize that our comfortable routine is no eternal necessity of things, but merely a little space of calm in the midst of the tempestuous untamed streaming of the world, and in order that we may be ready for danger.”

Readying for patrols in places like Afghanistan, American warriors fix loose tourniquets high on their own legs so they might save themselves if a limb is blown apart. One wonders how they regard the hazards they endured playing football?

Surveying the world today, who can conclude that we no longer need such men, Americans of toughness, resolve, and when required, valor? The world, not just in its myriad war zones, is a place of struggle and conflict. The schoolyard, the office, life itself we discover, requires a tested temper to endure and flourish. The lucky learn these paramount lessons young. One such lesson is that the hardest things are the most valuable. We find joy in the revelation that the impossible may be possible, but that such triumph rarely comes before doubt, struggle, even pain. Football teaches this course in the human core curriculum, an offering unavailable in the school of the safe space. Every cadet at the United States Military Academy knows what General Marshall asked during World War II: “I want an officer for a secret and dangerous mission. I want a West Point football player.”

I helped coach a youth football team in New York City. One boy was delivered to every practice by his mother who rushed through traffic from her job in a law office. She was a single mom and this was her only child. One day, I asked her why she made this sacrifice. She explained that despite the risks she was hearing so much about she thought she “understood what football stood for” and thought it important her son learn it’s lessons.

### The Choice of a Free People

An opponent of football, in arguing for its prohibition, compared it to dog fighting. Football players as unreasoning animals that must be patronized. Do football players need to be protected from their freedom? When those who won’t play the game seek to protect those who do a misunderstanding is exposed.

For players, the willing acceptance of the rigors and considered hazards of football is part of the game’s essential appeal. Vince Lombardi, the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, understood this. He remarked that he believed in God and that man was not “brute” by nature, but “the most competitive games draw the most competitive men . . . And in truth I’ve never known a man worth his salt who in the long run, deep down in his heart, didn’t appreciate the grind, the discipline. There is something in good men that really yearns for discipline and the harsh reality of head to head combat.”

Raw to the modern ear, pre-politically correct, but wrong? Today it is easier to condescend to Lombardi’s statement than to acknowledge its truth. Indeed, as we do about so many contemporary issues we know two things, what we are supposed to think and what we actually believe.

Theodore Roosevelt, football’s champion and ‘savior,’ could have had the gridiron in mind when he spoke of “the person who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood... Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those timid spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.”

## In Defense of Football Cont.

Pat Tillman, NFL player turned soldier, wrote in his letter to himself titled “Decision” about leaving a professional football career to join the U.S. Army Special Forces that football “embodied many of the qualities I deem meaningful: courage, toughness, strength, etc.” For him, the combat of the NFL was a “comfortable lifestyle.” But a voice told him, “it is not enough,” and he chose a greater challenge. Goethe noted that “the dangers of life are infinite and among them is safety.” How do those who decry football’s perceived dangers comprehend the decision to attempt Mt. Everest with its one fatality for every 10 successful attempts? The climber Reinhold Messner offered his answer, “without the possibility of death,” he said, “adventure is not possible.”

Football is not the labor of slaves, but the choice of free men. Balancing costs and benefits is the essence of freedom. Today, no player or parent chooses to play football absent a fulsome perception of risk. Should those who choose not to live in the grey twilight have that choice made for them by those who do? Man truly resembles a dog when his freedom is taken from him.

### A Question Unanswered

After three decades, I gather not with high school classmates from my French class, student government or teammates from other sports but only with my football teammates and coaches. We speak not of paralysis or CTE, but of the experiences we shared wearing the uniform. The empiricists scrutinizing football might allocate some of their prodigious effort to another important question. Why do millions of Americans look back across full lives, careers and families, and remember so prominently those bruised, mud spattered days of sacrifice and triumph?

The fathers of the Western intellectual tradition taught that life is a striving for human excellence, with strife and suffering its inescapable essence. Not pessimists, quite the opposite, they believed that true happiness comes from man’s hard victory in this struggle to live according to the highest and best in him. Lombardi, football’s Aristotle, perfectly captures the Greek idea of happiness as noble struggle: “Every man’s finest hour, his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear is that moment when he lies exhausted on the field of battle, victorious.”

Lombardi was clear that football is not war, but one of many to recognize its similarities. War, like nothing else, elicits the paradox that is man, selfish and depraved at his worst but also soaring and transcendent. Across recorded history the greatest honor sought and bestowed by man has been glory on the battlefield. Leonidas at Thermopylae, Horatius at the bridge, Henry at Agincourt, Colonel Chamberlain at Little Roundtop, and Major Doug Zembiec, the Lion of Fallujah. Courage, comradeship, honor were the first virtues of men. In many native languages the word for man and warrior are the same. War is terrible, and football demanding, but men who have been to battle together share an experience of brotherhood often unequaled in their lives.

Today “manliness” seems a pejorative. We hear of a “war on boys.” Margaret Mead said that modern America “hamstrung the man.” In an urban/suburban consumer society that grinds down distinctions between men and women has “masculinity” been marginalized? Have we arrived at Nietzsche’s “last man,” deracinated, androgynous, not permitted to play a game because he might get hurt?

Holmes asked, “But who of us could endure a world, although cut up into five acre lots, and having no man upon it who was not well fed and well housed, without the divine folly of honor...” Has the yearning of millennia disappeared from men’s souls? Or do we yet desire to prove our courage on the field? Do we love football because in it we retain a heritage, the quest for honor above all else? Would we, men or women, really want it to be otherwise?

The following variant of a familiar dining table dialogue has practical, medical, and teleological support:

“I want to play football.”

“You can’t, you might get hurt.”

“Well of course I might—and what of it?”

Understanding the value of football helps us defend it with clarity and without reservation. Football is an American tradition that embodies and instills high and important qualities. Just a game, it is true, but in the same way that America is just a country. We still cling to our religion, our guns, and our football.

On a hot August day five years ago, I met one of my sons after his very first football practice. His helmet off, sweaty, we met on the field. I extended my hand with a spontaneous phrase: “Welcome to the brotherhood.”

## Football Alberta Scholarships

This year Football AB offered 8 scholarships to graduating grade 12 players who are registered at an Alberta post-secondary institution and participating with a post-secondary football team.

Selections were based on their past accomplishments, career objectives and potential football playing years. The review committee received many qualified applicants in 2017.

### ***Congratulations go out to:***

Austin Gordon – St. Joseph, Grande Prairie  
Beko Wande – Notre Dame, Red Deer  
John (Jack) Burns – Henry Wise Wood, Calgary  
Joseph Dutton – St. Francis H.S., Calgary  
Riley Szafranski – Harry Ainlay, Edmonton

### **Additional Scholarships:**

#### **Football Alberta Brock Jacobs Scholarship**

T.J. Shopa-Ubell – Bev Facey, Sherwood Park

#### **Football Alberta - Alberta Bowl Scholarship**

Cole Milford – Holy Rosary, Lloydminster

#### **Football Alberta Calgary Stampeders Scholarship**

Deane Leonard – Notre Dame, Calgary

#### **Football Alberta Edmonton Eskimos Scholarship**

Tadi Siwira – Harry Ainlay, Edmonton

The award winners will each receive \$2,000 (\$1,000 per semester in 2017/18) based on the criteria established for the fund. If you or someone you know should be considered for a 2018 scholarship, [click here](#) for more information.



## Football Alberta Membership and Insurance

Football AB membership and insurance is valid January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017.

Note: ALL minor teams must take out insurance. See [our website](#) for more details.

### **PLAN #1 - TEAM AND PLAYER INSURANCE:**

**Includes \$5 Million Liability & Accident Insurance for the following rates:**

(Team Fee + Mandatory Insurance for all Minor teams)

These fees are in effect when payment is made on time.

- After the fee deadline, Late Fees will apply.

- Minor Late Fees: After Sept. 30th, add \$125 (12-man, 10-man) and \$65 (6-man)

- High School / Other Late Fees: After Oct. 7th, Add \$125 (12-man & 9-man) and \$65 (6-man)

### **PLAN #2 - TEAM MEMBERSHIP ONLY - NO INSURANCE**

(Team Fee + Optional Insurance if required)

High School, Six Man High School, Junior, University

	FEES (Includes GST)	LATE FEES: After Oct. 7
High School: 9 & 12-man	Team fee of \$262.50	\$125.00
High School: 6-man	Team fee of \$ 78.75	\$ 65.00
Junior/University	Team fee of \$262.50	\$125.00

## League Coordinators and Team Managers

Membership and insurance runs on the calendar year (January 1 to December 31). It is easiest for league/team administrators to register players at the start of the year for gym nights in January and February and then continue to register players as they join the team. It is extremely important for the welfare of the players and team personnel that insurance is valid (and thus paid for) as soon as you enter your winter/spring roster. Please note that the insurance policy provides both accident and liability coverage. Coverage is required for players playing one day, one week or all season.

For further information on Membership Details as well as a **new registration policy for Capital District Minor Football Association (CDMFA) teams**, go to <http://footballalberta.ab.ca/web/membership/>



Thank you to the Edmonton Eskimos  
and the Calgary Stampeders  
For their Continued Support of  
Football Alberta

