

WIDESIDE

The Official Newsletter of Football Alberta



Spring Edition, 90th Issue

Spring 2014

Novice and Atom Flag Football—Register Now



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Eskimos' Novice and Atom Flag Football program runs in the fall for ages 6 to 10. All games and practices take place in the Commonwealth Fieldhouse. For more details, see our website ...

http://footballalberta.ab.ca/web/novice_flag_football/

National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) Update—by Brian Fryer, Ex. D.

Most of you should be aware of the new NCCP programs that are available. A good source for the program is at:

<http://footballalberta.ab.ca/web/coaching/nccp.php>

What is offered now is the Community Sport for novice or parent type coaches. This is available online at Football Canada's website at (<http://www.footballcanada.com/Home/tabid/38/language/en-CA/Default.aspx>).

The other course available through Football Alberta is the Competition Introduction at Position. We still have to train our Learning Facilitators (LF's) for the next module that will be offered next year. This will be Competition Introduction at Coordinator. Coaches must attend the Competition at Position course and have taken at least two positions to qualify for the Coordinator clinic. To take the second Competition at Position, you would not have to attend the classroom portion, just the position technical module that is taught.

All coaches must take the Making Ethical Decisions (MED) course online at the Coaching Association of Canada (www.coach.ca) and click the Locker. In order to remain active this has to be taken over the next four years.

For coaches who want to be certified you would need to have Competition at Position or Coordinator, Course workbook sent in to us, MED online course and be evaluated. We will have Evaluators available for next year.

For coaches who do not want to be certified they would have 'Trained' status with the Coaching Association of Canada's database. For coaches taking the courses they would be 'In Training'.

So there are several options for coaches to go through the system from wanting to be just a parent coach for 2-3 years, to being Trained or coaches who want to be Certified and move up the ladder in coaching development opportunities.

Football Alberta Annual Team Fundraiser—not available in 2014

Unfortunately we will no longer be offering the Pull Ticket team fundraiser due to Gaming and licencing criteria. Since this raffle has to be licenced now, it does not work with how we offered the booklets before. We sincerely appreciate all of the teams who participated in this program in the past.

Member League Websites...Do we have a link to your league? Call us to add/update a link.

Minor Leagues

CDMFA <http://www.cdmfa.ca/>
 Red Deer Minor FB www.reddeerminorfootball.ca/
 Calgary Bantam <http://www.cbfa.ab.ca/>
 SAMFA - Bantam <http://southernalbertaminorfootball.ab.ca/>
 Lloydminster Minor <http://www.lmfa.info/>
 GP Pee Wee <http://www.gppwfl.com/>

Officials

Calgary <http://www.cgyfoa.ab.ca/>
 Edmonton <http://www.efoa.ca/>

Jr. Prairie Conf. <http://www.pfcfootball.com>
 Senior Men's <http://www.eteamz.com/albertafootballleague/>

High School

Edm. Metro <http://www.telusplanet.net/public/metroedm/Football.html>
 Calgary <http://www.calgaryhighschoolsports.com>
 Wheatland <http://www.wheatlandfootball.ca/>
 Rockyview <http://rvsa.rockyview.ab.ca/>

Touch & Flag

Edmonton Touch <http://www.etfa.ab.ca/>
 Red Deer Touch <http://rdtfa.redzoneleagues.com/>
 Calgary Touch <http://www.calgarytouchfootball.com/>
 Edmonton Flag <http://www.efa.ab.ca/>
 Calgary Youth <http://www.calgaryyouthflagfootball.ca/>



25th Annual Senior Bowl

12:00 pm (Noon) Monday May 19th, 2014

Commonwealth Stadium, Edmonton

Tickets \$10/each available at the gate



NORTH All-Star Team

All players listed alphabetically by position

Quarterback

Cory Knott (Paul Kane, St. Albert)
Patrick O'Neill (Jasper Place, Edmonton)

Runningback

David Adebayo (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)
Jacob Battenfelder (Fort Saskatchewan)
Fabeian Johnson (Austin O'Brien, Edmonton)
Donivan Grannum (Holy Rosary, Lloydminster)

Receivers

Ty Babiuk (Whitecourt)
Connor Bergerson (Salisbury, Sherwood Park)
Kain Kell (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)
Colby Miller (Spruce Grove)
Frederic Muamba (Austin O'Brien, Edmonton)
Jonathan Muamba (Austin O'Brien, Edmonton)
Tristan Schultenkamper (Jasper Place, Edmonton)
Tyler Turner (Paul Kane, St. Albert)

Offensive Line

Zachary Creighton (Bev Facey, Sherwood Park)
Mark Korte (Spruce Grove)
Justin Lawrence (Spruce Grove)
Eric Mahe (Holy Rosary, Lloydminster)
Joe McQuay (Notre Dame, Red Deer)
Brendon Sitko (Fort McMurray)
T.J. Sloboda (H.J. Cody, Sylvan Lake)

Defensive Line

Kolton Batdorf (Ross Sheppard, Edmonton)
Bronson Boley (Peace River)
Jack Hanna (Bellerose, St. Albert)
Oleg Ivanchenko (Austin O'Brien, Edmonton)
Jordan McCormick (Lloydminster)
Jacob Neuls (Bellerose, St. Albert)
Jordan Sperounes (Lloydminster)

Linebackers

Timothy Atrazhev (Ross Sheppard, Edmonton)
Mitch Brinston (Salisbury, Sherwood Park)
Brendan Friesen (Ardrossan)
Tim Hayward (Lindsay Thurber, Red Deer)
Taylor Visser (St. Josephs, Grande Prairie)

Defensive Backs

Cole Christianson (Ardrossan)
Daniel Loggale (W.P. Wagner, Edmonton)
Brandon Mellen (Jasper Place, Edmonton)
Kadeem Morin (Austin O'Brien, Edmonton)
Tyler Moroz (Bellerose, St. Albert)
Joshua Ouellette (Grande Prairie)
Sheldon Shaw (W.P. Wagner, Edmonton)

Kicker/Punter

Vuyani Ndhlovu (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)

SOUTH All-Star Team

All players listed alphabetically by position

Quarterbacks

Matthew Fortini (Notre Dame, Calgary)
Bailey Wasdal (Bishop McNally/Father Lacombe, Calgary)

Runningbacks

Jordan Fasano (Bowness, Calgary)
Isaiah McLellan (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Spencer Miller (Cardston)
Franco Poon (St. Francis, Calgary)

Receivers

Jagveer Bahia (Ernest Manning, Calgary)
Julian Barnett (Bishop McNally/Father Lacombe, Calgary)
Clay Flack (Notre Dame, Calgary)
Philip Hallett (George McDougall, Airdrie)
William Maxwell (St. Francis, Calgary)
Kyle Moortgat (Cochrane)
Seth Roemmele (Willow Creek, Claresholm)
Jake Smith (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)

Offensive Line

Brendan Bray (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Dale Cummings (Cochrane)
Steven Dalquist (Bowness, Calgary)
Trea Hande (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Dylan Helbing (Foothills, Okotoks)
Logan Wall (McCoy, Medicine Hat)
Liam West (McCoy, Medicine Hat)

Defensive Line

David Choi (Western Canada, Calgary)
Anthony Crowshoe (St. Mary's, Calgary)
Brayden Dorren (Bowness, Calgary)
Carlo Gallotta (Notre Dame, Calgary)
Brady McCafferty (Bishop McNally/Father Lacombe, Calgary)
Jason Van de Graaf (Rundle College, Calgary)

Linebackers

Colton Burr (Notre Dame, Calgary)
James Gaetz (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Alan Lister (Drumheller)
Scott MacMillan (Cochrane)
Stephen Nagy (Notre Dame, Calgary)
Jared South (Centennial, Calgary)
Cody Thompson (Foothills, Okotoks)

Defensive Backs

Kendrick Ankamah (B. McNally/Father Lacombe, Calgary)
Andrew Britton (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Linden Klein (Crescent Heights, Medicine Hat)
Marco Scafidi (Notre Dame, Calgary)
Aaron Statz (Notre Dame, Calgary)
Nick Statz (Notre Dame, Calgary)
Ryan Volpi (Notre Dame, Calgary)

Kicker/Punter

Kyle Byrne (Western Canada, Calgary)

After four Talent ID Camps held over two April weekends in **Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, and Lacombe** which totaled over **325 participants** that narrowed them down to **110 finalists** followed by the **Final Selection Camp on May 9-11**, Football Alberta is pleased to announce the following **40 players** who have been selected as **Team Alberta U18 2014**. The final 40 players will now compete in the **Football Canada Cup** this July in **Saskatoon**. The players selected to this camp come from Grade 10 & 11. Alberta has been to the National Championship Game in that tournament the last three years and have finished as runners up to Quebec each time.

Here is the roster for Team Alberta 2014 listed by position and alphabetically with their school.

Quarterback

Alex Basilis (St. Mary's, Calgary)
Colton Hunchak (Notre Dame, Calgary)

Runningback

Daniel Adesegun
(B. McNally/F. Lacombe, Calgary)
Miles Browne (Notre Dame, Calgary)
Tristen Getzinger (Medicine Hat)
Landon Rosene (H.J. Cody, Sylvan Lake)

Receivers

Kelton Bailey (Peace River)
Sam Clayton (Bev Facey, Sherwood Park)
Justin Dasiuk (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Jacob Janke (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)
Trey Kellogg (Foothills, Okotoks)
Ben Pasiuk (Lindsay Thurber, Red Deer)
Nathan Rowe (St. Francis, Calgary)

Offensive Line

Brendan Barnes (Centennial, Calgary)
Nathan Chimiuk (Spruce Grove)
Dawson Drewniak (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Darth Hundal (St. Francis, Calgary)
Ryan Kerr (Bev Facey, Sherwood Park)
Ramey Kharfan (Ross Sheppard, Edmonton)
Tristan Ofsdahl (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)

Defensive Line

Dexter Da Silva (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)
Tammo Fouad (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)
Anthony Hume (Harry Ainlay, Edmonton)
Ethan Mahony (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
J-Min Pelley (B. McNally/F. Lacombe, Calgary)
Bobby Sugai (Raymond)

Linebackers

Ivan Boychuk (Cold Lake)
Gavin Burns (Willow Creek, Claresholm)
Brendon Doubell (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Jonathan Leggett (Holy Trinity Academy, Okotoks)
Rory O'Donovan (St. Albert)
Cameron St. Amand (Bishop Carroll, Calgary)

Defensive Backs

Daylon Creason (Foothills, Okotoks)
Bowen Lewis (Notre Dame, Calgary)
Cody Ouwejan (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Joshua Quarles (Henry Wise Wood, Calgary)
Tony Savchuk (Jasper Place, Edmonton)
Owen Smith (Lindsay Thurber, Red Deer)
Jadin White (Centennial, Calgary)

Kicker

Des Catellier (St. Francis, Calgary)

Football Alberta Coaching Awards for 2013 Season

Football Alberta annually recognizes outstanding coaches who have made a commitment to their team(s) and/or the sport of Football in our Province. Winners of the 2013 Coach of the Year Awards were selected from among many nominees and presented with their awards at the Senior Bowl game at Commonwealth Stadium on May 19th, 2014.

Harold Ferguson Official of the Year Bob Androschuk - Lloydminster

Bob Androschuk has been a fixture in the Lloydminster football community for over 30 years. Starting out as a coach he was instrumental in the introduction of the sport to Holy Rosary H.S. For the last two decades he has served as an official in the Lloydminster area handling games from Pee-Wee to Senior Men's. In 2012, Bob was selected to officiate the Senior Men's National Final when it was hosted in Lloydminster. His tireless work has assisted the growth of the game in the Border City and he continues to ensure that the officiating offered in that area is second to none.

Novice Coach of the Year Kessie Stefanyk—Lethbridge Steel

The first ever coaching award winner from the Western Women's Canadian Football League, Kessie is a shining light in the development of the women's tackle game. After graduating from the University of Lethbridge rugby program, Kessie was one of the inaugural players for the brand new Lethbridge Steel. After two years as starting QB, she came on as a coach in 2012 and has since moved up to Offensive Coordinator and Assistant Head Coach. In both her years on the coaching staff she has helped the Steel to two consecutive WWCFL Final appearances and for that she is the 2013 Novice Coach of the Year.

Atom / PeeWee Coach of the Year James Devine—Edmonton Chargers

James has a long history with the Edmonton Chargers, starting as a player in the 1980's and returning as a coach for the past 20 years after his playing days were done. Since that time he has held many positions on all of the teams the Chargers offer as well as with Victory Christian H.S. but it is through his work as the Pee-Wee Head Coach in 2013 that he is being honored. The Pee-Wee Chargers went 7-0 in the regular season of the CDMFA and swept through the playoffs without giving up a single point before facing the powerful Calgary Cowboys in the Provincial Tier I final who they defeated 56-14. Your 2013 Atom/Pee-Wee Coach of the Year is James Devine.

Bantam Coach of the Year Al Cooper - Calgary Cowboys

The leader of arguably the most powerful bantam football organization in Alberta, Al Cooper of the Calgary Cowboys has done it again. Going 13-0 in 2013, Al lead the Calgary Cowboys Grey team to its second consecutive Provincial Tier I Championship. The fact that one of the teams they had to beat to accomplish this feat was the other Calgary Cowboys team in the Calgary Bantam Final, is testament to not only the strength of his team but also the organization he heads up. With a 25-16 come from behind victory over the Sherwood Park Rams in the Provincial Tier I Final, Al Cooper is your 2013 Bantam Coach of the Year.

High School Tier IV Coach of the Year Dustin Fallscheer—Holy Rosary H.S. (Lloydminster)

A prodigal son returned home has helped create one of the strongest Tier IV programs in Alberta. Dustin played quarterback for Holy Rosary in the early 1990's and upon graduating from both the football team and engineering school at Queens returned home to Lloydminster where he has been a coach at his old high school for the past 13 years. In 2013, serving as both Offensive Coordinator and Co-Head Coach, he helped what was thought to be a .500 team advance to its fourth Wheatland League Final in the past six years as well as a trip to the Alberta Bowl and the Tier IV Championship Game. A well respected volunteer coach, Dustin Fallscheer is the 2013 Tier IV Coach of the Year.

High School Tier III Coach of the Year Dave McKinnon - Ardrossan Jr./Sr. H.S.

A bump in school population didn't slow down Dave McKinnon's Ardrossan Bisons in 2013. Despite their student count pushing them to Tier III from their tradition Tier IV level, where they had advanced to the Provincial Final in four of the past five seasons, they didn't miss a trick going all the way to the Provincial Final again - this time in the higher Tier. Although they lost both the Edmonton Metro Miles Championship Game and the Provincial Tier III Title game at the Alberta Bowl, 56-12 to Cardston, the resiliency showed by the entire program to continue to excel at a higher level was exemplified by their Head Coach, Dave McKinnon - the 2013 Tier III Coach of the Year.

Football Alberta Coaching Awards cont'd.

Laurie Robertson
High School Tier II Coach of the Year
 Kyle Kirillo, Austin O'Brien H.S. (Edmonton)

The Crusaders defensive coordinator for the past 11 years, Kyle's contributions were front and center to the third straight Provincial Tier II Championship for Austin O'Brien, 28-7 over Foothills from Okotoks. Playing in the tough Edmonton Division I, Kyle's defense lead the league - in which every other member is a Tier I team - in points against and averaged only 5 points against per game versing Tier II opposition in Provincial play. Since 2011, Austin O'Brien is 14-0 versing Tier II sized schools and holds the record for least yardage against in the Alberta Bowl Tier II Final (103 yards set in 2012). If it's true that defense wins championships then that explains why Kyle Kirillo is the 2013 Tier II Coach of the Year.

Frank Morris Tier I Coach of the Year
 Matthew Sartorelli - Notre Dame H.S. (Calgary)

In 10 games this past year, the powerful Notre Dame Pride from Calgary rang up 445 points and the master play caller behind all of that firepower was their offensive coordinator - Matthew Sartorelli. A teacher on staff at Notre Dame, Matthew also serves as the Athletic Director and has been a part of the Pride's rise winning championships with them in 2009, 2010, and 2012 prior to this year. This year's effort saw a domination few teams have shown before as no team came within three touchdowns of the Pride on their way to their second consecutive Provincial Tier I Title with a record breaking 65-11 defeat of the Henry Wise Wood Warriors and a share of the #1 ranking of Canadian High Schools. For his efforts, Matthew Sartorelli is the 2013 Frank Morris Tier I Coach of the Year.

The Norman Kimball Award
 David Diluzio - Notre Dame H.S. (Calgary)

They call polls that determine national #1 rankings "mythical national championships" but there certainly wasn't anything "mythical" about the 2013 season had by the Notre Dame Pride. Coming off their first ever Tier I Provincial Title in 2012 the Pride left no doubt about their charge to a second consecutive title blasting their opponents by an average score of 45-4 and claiming the 2013 Provincial Tier I Title as well as sharing the National #1 High School ranking. This shouldn't come as a surprise as the man who has lead the charge for the program through two Provincial Tier II Titles in 2007 and 2008 and now the domination of the Tier I level continues to excel at his profession. One of the brightest lights in Alberta football, the Norm Kimball Coach of the Year for 2013 is David Diluzio.

Gary Hobson Volunteer of the Year Award
 Faith Zachar - Pincher Creek

Football would not exist in Pincher Creek if it wasn't for Faith Zachar. Starting in 1994, Faith and a small band of volunteers started the Pincher Creek high school football program and she has served as their General Manager/President for the past 19 seasons. During that time she also spearheaded the creation of the Pincher Creek Mustang Bantam program in 1998 and two years later installed the Mustang Pee-Wee program. Faith pretty much covers the gamut of jobs for the team coordinating the promotion, recruiting, fundraising, travel arrangements and league responsibilities. In the wind swept foothills of Alberta, where you would least expect to find a football program, is one that is thriving on three different levels mainly due to the efforts of the 2013 Gary Hobson Volunteer of the Year - Faith Zachar.

Life Membership / Hall of Fame Award
 Bill Lorfing - Calgary Football Officials Association

Bill's football officiating career spans close to 50 years. Originally from Georgia, Bill immigrated with his family to Canada in 1973 after serving as a fighter pilot in Viet Nam. For the next 41 years he raised a family and taught high school science as well as never missing a season of officiating both football and basketball. Along the way, Bill achieved a Level 5 certification and officiated games at the CFL, CIS, CJFL, High School and Minor levels. In 2013 he stepped away from the field but continued his involvement as Football Canada's Master Facilitator for Officials Training. Known for his calm demeanor and adept communication skills Football Alberta is proud to recognize Bill Lorfing as its 2013 recipient of the Life Membership/Hall of Fame Award.

NEED RESOURCE MATERIALS FOR THE COACHING SEASON?

If you missed out on coaching clinics or if you want to better your skills, visit the Resource Materials section on the Football Alberta website <http://footballaberta.ab.ca/web/resources/> for a complete list of materials available through the office.



Football Alberta Scholarship Program - June 12th deadline

Applications are being accepted from athletes in Alberta Tackle Football High School programs...provided their school Football teams are confirmed paid members of Football Alberta in the year of the application. The applicant must be a graduating Grade 12 player having played tackle high school football within the Alberta Schools Athletic Association (ASAA) system.

The recipient must be registered for full time attendance (as stipulated by the institution) at an accredited Alberta post-secondary institution all year or both semesters. The program of study must be a minimum two (2) years in duration. The Applicant must be participating on a post-secondary Alberta football team of their choice during the year of application.

WHAT IS AVAILABLE? (8 Scholarships are available for the 2014/ 2015 year) x \$2,000.00 each = \$16,000.00

- Six (6) scholarships (including one more than last year...Brock Jacobs Scholarship was added in honor of the passing of Football Alberta's Calgary minor board member), plus one (1) additional in Edmonton and one(1) in Calgary are available (Thanks to Calgary Stampeders and the Edmonton Eskimos 50/50 support program). There are 5 Scholarship/Award regions with each demographically equal region having the capability of receiving one award winner each year (see below). Regions will be Northern Alberta, Edmonton, Central Alberta, Calgary and Southern Alberta based on approximately the same number of teams in each region.
- There must be a minimum of five applicants in a region/zone in order to be awarded a scholarship.
- If a region does not meet the minimum threshold of five applicants, then applicants from that region will be pooled with region that has the next lowest number of applicants.
- If there is a vacant zone, it will be awarded to an applicant from the region with the highest number of applicants.
- If there are two or more regions that have less than the five required applicants, those regions would be combined to create a suitable number of applicants eligible for one scholarship.

For more information visit: <http://footballalberta.ab.ca/web/grants/scholarships.php>



Football Alberta 2014 Membership & Insurance

Football AB membership and insurance is valid January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014.

Note: ALL minor teams must take out insurance.

Plan #1 (2014 Team Membership + Player & Team Personnel Accident & Liability Insurance)

Minor / Midget	Team fee of \$157.50 (incl. GST) + \$20.00 per person
High School	Team fee of \$183.75 (incl. GST) + \$20.00 per person
Junior/University	Team fee of \$183.75 (incl. GST) + \$20.00 per person
Senior Men/Female	\$20.00 per person
Flag/Touch	\$7.00 per person

Plan #2 (Team Membership Only, No Insurance)

High School, 6 & 9 Man, Midget, Junior & University teams: \$183.75 (incl. GST). This plan is for teams that have adequate insurance.

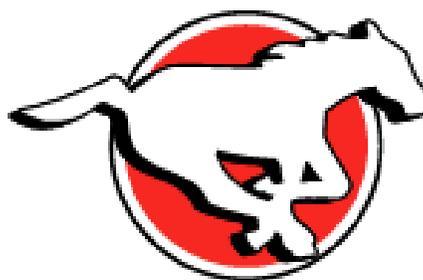
Once again, teams and/or leagues should use their username and password to register their team at <https://footballalberta.ab.ca/members/>. Delete players who will not be returning for 2014 and add any new players. Please do not delete players who attend a 2014 practice/gym night or selection camp and then do not play with the team. Insurance payment should be collected from those players and submitted for coverage for the year.

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 the
Senior Bowl Program**



How to Create Football People in Your Community—by Tim Enger, BPE, MA

If I come off a little paranoid in this article I'll apologize in advance. However, you'll have to throw me a bone on this one as I have been at Football Alberta for 25 years and have seen a lot. Most of it is really good. I've seen our sport continue to grow and in some ways flourish in Alberta despite the total onslaught of the specialization of other sports and their 12 months a year programming that has grown exponentially in the past two decades.



Other sports, notably soccer and hockey, are scooping up the kids as young as age 4, identifying the talented ones, and creating a year long list of activities that not only chain these kids to one sport but create diehard supporters of their sport in the form of their parents. With the total pool of salaries in the NHL bordering on a billion (yes, billion with a “b”) if your 4 year old scores a goal in his first ankle skating experience on the ice you can't help but get dollar signs in your eyes - believe me I know this from personal experience (my kid scored six in his first game ☺). From there, you are prepared to spare no expense and give in to the Tim Horton commercial style 6 a.m. practices wherever they might be, until the dream eventually dies (which it will for 99.9% of us). The fear, as a parent, that you might not have done all you can to get Jr. into the big leagues is very palpable in our society and explains why the term “Hockey Parent” continues to grow in infamy and monetary commitments and emotions in the stands continue to rise in that sport each year.

Soccer doesn't have the big dollars at the end of the line but they do a great job in creating a fanaticism about their sport which causes parents to sign their kid up for outdoor soccer for the spring and summer and indoor soccer for the fall and winter. Friends of mine who jumped on this Merry-Go-Round say there is exactly two weeks in the fall and two weeks in the spring when they transition between indoor and outdoor and vice versa and they do it without complaint realizing that's 11 months of soccer a year and they're just fine with that.

Now, we in football aren't exactly Saints here either. The addition of Midget football in the spring and a proliferation of off-season camps have made for busy times for our upper level minor and high school players, however we still take it easy on the younger kids and encourage them to play other sports. Where we're falling short though is in the creation of “football people”. The same kind of mom, dad, uncle, aunt or grandparent that supports hockey and soccer so thoroughly are few and far between on the gridiron in comparison.

Again, my paranoia might be a little much but we're facing some huge challenges. Even though other sports have been proven to have their fair share of concussion issues it seems to be football that the media leaps all over with this ‘crisis’. Major injuries and deaths in other sports are considered unfortunate accidents (see Sarah Burke in freestyle skiing) while most every calamity in football is scrutinized to the last detail and usually winds up in court.

How to Create Football People in Your Community (cont.)

Hollywood doesn't help out here either. You can't help but notice that in most portrayals of high school or college football players in movies or on TV they are selfish, entitlement ridden bullies whose only job it seems to be is torment the geeky hero geeky hero. We all know a different story about the great kids who graduate from our sport to become leaders in their community with hearts of gold, but on the Silver Screen, it always seems to be a different story.

Thus our public persona is not very good and the NFL estimates that the tipping point is about 30%. That is if 30% or more of the mothers out there, on both sides of the border, decide that their son's will never play football, the decrease in enrollment could be disastrous.



The other scary part is found in recent dealings with local civic and facility recreation administrators. Football may be the most popular sport in North America but to assume your local Recreation Department has any football knowledge is a big mistake. Three of the last five artificial turf stadiums built in Alberta are testament to that. While Lacombe and Lethbridge nailed it, the sites in Millwoods, St. Albert, and Spruce Grove are all woefully inadequate in some way or another to host high school and higher football games. Now, let's be clear that the people who designed and signed off on these places had the best intentions but nobody seems to know what is required by football anymore.

This hopefully will be rectified by the inclusion of Football Stadium Guidelines in the new rule books but in many places the damage is done. J.P. Bowl in Edmonton was promised a Press/Spotters box a few years after it was built...in 1968. 46 years and counting.....

In short, we don't have "people" and with the overwhelming numbers of soccer players and passionate supporters our facilities have been reduced to "rectangular fields" in the eyes of those who make the decisions rather than the football stadiums they were built to be.

The solution is really quite simple. We have to go "young". Hockey is hockey is hockey and will always be the straw that stirs the national psyche but other than those recent immigrants to Canada who are bringing their sporting culture with them, where do you think the "soccer people" come from? More often than not it's some mom or dad who is last in line at registration with a 4 year old in tow. They may or may not have played soccer in the past but since everyone is signing their kids up - and soccer is very accessible to those looking for something for their little balls of energy to do - they joined the parade. What soccer is also very accessible to is the rookie coach, so mom or dad who are last in line and informed that their team needs a coach have no worries when handed the clipboard and whistle. The kids have fun and Coach Dad enjoys himself too. It's easy as pie to start and thus you now have a soccer family.

How to Create Football People in Your Community (cont.)

Football on the other hand doesn't have a soft landing for the initial entry. Usually you have to wait until nine years old and then it's football as the pros do it. Full equipment and even though some leagues do have adapted numbers and operation for Atoms it's the same game the pros play. In football, Coach Dad needs to know his stuff to a much greater extent than his colleagues in soccer and hockey who for the most part are just rolling a ball onto the field or opening gates and letting the next five onto the ice. Offense, defense, positional play, and in some crazy situations - special teams. It's herding cats at the best of times and limited to the very brave who want to take on the coaching task. And for the players? Every year we hear from someone who says Atom football is fine and that their 7 year old can handle it no problem. While that is great to hear, you can imagine that for every one of those gifted 7 year old there are probably 500 kids that age who can't handle it. Do we disregard these kids all together? Soccer wouldn't.

In 2012, Football Alberta entered into an experiment with the Edmonton Eskimos, University of Alberta Golden Bears, and InMotion Network to create the Eskimos Novice Flag Football League for kids aged 6-8. The goal was to get kids running, passing and catching in a semi-organized environment which would promote skill development before a "game/scrimmage" against another team. It was run once a week indoors at the Commonwealth Stadium Fieldhouse over 8 weeks and attracted 60 players the first year. In 2013 it was run again and 160 players registered. It's pretty basic stuff. 5 on 5 with five plays from the 30 yard line to score repeated over and over until times up. Kind of like what all of us did as kids in the park, which you know is a rarity to see these days.

One of the off-shoots now is that we were starting to develop a "football people" culture with the parents of these youngsters. This isn't the prettiest level of football to watch and in some cases it takes the term "herding cats" to a new level, however it's that soft landing we've always been looking for. It's easy to operate. Mom and/or Dad can easily get involved even with limited to no football experience and it's FUN! While it is hoped that these kids progress to Atom and Pee-Wee tackle football and take Coach Mom and/or Dad along for the ride at the very least we stand a fighting chance of competing with the hockey's and soccer's of the world to get the young kids and their families to love us too.

In 2013, Lloydminster offered Novice Flag and got 60 participants under the direction of Holy Rosary High School and the City of Edmonton folded a flag program into their summer camp programming. Calgary has had flag football for kids aged 7-17 for as long as people can remember. In 2014 the Eskimo Novice and Atom Flag Football League hopes to handle over 300 kids.

Football is a great game and it comes in many shapes. The thought of trying to teach 6 year olds anything is terrifying enough without taking on the seven distinct positions and three distinct systems that have to be taught to play a full tackle football game. Flag for the littlest participants gives us the opportunity to get kids in the door earlier and learn to love the game on their terms and who knows? Out of all the kids we have participating these days perhaps the first Canadian starting QB in the CFL in a long time will come out of kids who learned to throw at age 6 like their American counterparts.

If you think your community could benefit from an introductory Flag League please contact us at the Football Alberta office. We have a turn-key manual for how to introduce and run a league as well as an easy step by step coaching progression for the last-in-line Mom or Dad in your registration line. Eight weeks in the fall and about 6-8 kids a team is all you need and you too could be a part of creating more "football people" in your community.

Give us a call ☺