



# Sherwood Park Northstars

## Player and Family

## Handbook

*Part of the community since 1978*

[www.northstarsfootball.com](http://www.northstarsfootball.com)

Facebook: Sherwood Park Northstars

Instagram: northstarsfootball

Twitter: Northstars Football

Email: [spnorthstars@gmail.com](mailto:spnorthstars@gmail.com)

YouTube: 2017 Northstars Football

# Sherwood Park Northstars

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## MISSION AND VISION OF THE NORTHSTARS

Successful enterprises have a vision of who they are, why they succeed and where they are going. They have shared values and principles that guide them through changing times and the inevitable challenges to succeed.

### ``Building Support, Teamwork, Achievements, Respect and Success``

To achieve this vision, we will:

- \* Strive to develop the full potential of each athlete regardless of his or her innate ability
- \* Encourage an atmosphere of team unity in which coaches, athletes and parents all contribute to team success
- \* Understand that playing football is not a right but a privilege and recognize that family and education are the primary focus of the athlete
- \* Recognize that all athletes will be treated fairly and equally
- \* Develop team financial resources in order to maximize the quality of the programs, equipment and coaching available to all players
- \* Project a positive team image to the community in order to increase team participation and community support
- \* Stress sportsmanship and teamwork through team spirit and mutual support
- \* Prepare players to compete successfully at the local and provincial levels of competition in accordance with the rules of the governing body of the sport

The Northstars have been part of the Strathcona County sports community for over 30 years, using the game of football as a tool of opportunity in teaching the players, coaches and parents to be **S.T.A.R.S.** (**S**upport, **T**eamwork, **A**chievements, **R**espect and **S**uccess) on and off the field.



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## TEAM PHILOSOPHY AND EXPECTATIONS

Our primary goal is to teach new and existing players fundamental techniques and strategies of Canadian football. In doing so, we ensure the team has fun and enjoys the sport of football, while striving to be as competitive as we can be.

While the Northstars do not like to do so, we reserve the right to cut any player from the team. This is only done if a player fails to abide by our team philosophies and rules or if it is in the interest of his or her safety or the safety of the teammates. We will make every effort to accommodate any player that wishes to play football before resorting to such measures.

We will attempt to get every player in the game as often as possible. Players with more experience may receive more playing time and less experienced players are encouraged to use this opportunity as a learning experience to guarantee more playing time in the future. Everyone will have the opportunity to put his or her best effort forward throughout the season. Player effort, skill development, participation and attitude will dictate how much time they spend on the field.

Prior to expressing a concern of an emotional nature, we ask that you take some time to consider the situation. We use a **24 hour rule**. Please consider your concern for that time before approaching the Coaches, Team Manager, President or Executive. The same is expected of all players, coaches, Executive and parents. The purpose of this statement is to avoid heat of the moment conflict and to allow common sense and reason to prevail.

**Players** are expected to raise their concerns to the coaching staff as a first step, then, if necessary to the Team Manager.

**Parents** are expected to raise their concerns to the Team Manager.

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## TIPS FROM THE TRAINING STAFF

Hydration, or water intake, is the number one controllable variable in sports performance. Every athlete, regardless of competition level, requires adequate hydration to ensure peak performance. It is highly recommended that every player drink at least 2 litres of fluids per day. It is best to follow these guidelines:

### Optimal Hydration

- Best if it happens over time...trickle it in
- Best if you are consistent...make drinking water a habit
- Avoid caffeine (i.e. soft drinks) and all other diuretics...caffeine causes you to lose water

### Water Facts

- 65% of our body weight is water
- Water vs. corn syrup running in your veins – this illustrates the difference in completely hydrated vs. dehydrated
- You cannot fully hydrate 1 – 2 hours before a game
- You need to drink water throughout the day, not chug a large quantity in one sitting
- Caffeine makes you lose lots of water (i.e. 4 cups of Pepsi will make you lose 6 cups of water)
- Water helps lubricate joints and cushions organs and tissues
- Make sure you continue to hydrate yourself throughout practice and games. Bring a water bottle with you. The Northstars will also have access to water for each practice and game.

### Meals

- Do not have a large meal prior to practices and games. A high carbohydrate meal (pasta two hours before practices and games) is easily converted by the body into energy. Heavy foods, such as burgers, junk food and chocolate will not provide the energy levels that the body needs to function at a peak level. Having a big meal then running out to practice may well result in the player becoming sick to his stomach during practice due to exertion.
- Monitoring food intake and hydration during the hot summer months is especially important. High temperatures and dry atmospheres create a high demand on the body for water and proper nutrition.

### Medications

- At the beginning of the season, players will be asked to fill out a form identifying any medical issues that the Training Staff should be aware of.
- Any player who has been prescribed an inhaler (or “Puffer”) by their physician as treatment for asthma, allergies, etc must ensure that a member of the Training Staff has their inhaler before practices and games. The player will not be permitted to participate unless a member of the Training Staff has the inhaler before the practice or game.

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- Any player who has been prescribed an EpiPen for allergies by their physician must ensure that a member of the Training Staff has their EpiPen before practices and games. The player will not be permitted to participate unless a member of the Training Staff has the EpiPen before the practice or game.
- Any other medical or physical condition that may jeopardize a player's well-being while practicing or playing football must be brought to the attention of the Training Staff.

### **THESE ARE NON-NEGOTIABLE**

The Training Staff will manage all aspects of first aid for players during all practices and games. The Trainers will work towards the best interests of the player. The Training Staff asks that they be permitted to do their job with minimal interference. If the Training Staff believes that parental involvement is necessary for the care of an injured player, the parent will be summoned onto the field.

### **DO NOT ENTER THE FIELD OF PLAY UNLESS REQUESTED TO DO SO**

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## EQUIPMENT

Provided by the club:

- Helmet
- Shoulder Pads
- Knee pads
- One pair of practice pants and belt
- One pair of game pants and belt
- Two game jerseys (held at clubhouse and given on day of game, returned after game)
- Additional padding as required by the player's position

Girdles will be available through the club for purchase at current cost. Lost or forgotten (game day) items will have to be purchased at the current cost. This includes:

- Socks
- Mouth guards
- Knee pads
- Game jersey
- Game pants
- Chin straps
- Helmet (prorated if older than 5 years)

\*\*If a mouthguard is forgotten, the team will issue one at a cost of \$15.00 to the family and can be paid promptly at a later date so the player can participate.

Players are expected to wash pants weekly after game day. Parent volunteers will take care of the jerseys. Shoulder pads and helmets are to be disinfected monthly. The Equipment Manager will be available to assist.

All equipment is to be hung up neatly in the clubhouse or taken home and brought back to each practice and game. Loose and abused equipment will not be tolerated. Helmets are not to be thrown, dropped or otherwise abused. When helmets are set on the ground, they are to be set upright.

Any required equipment repairs are to be brought to the Equipment Manager's attention after a practice/game. This will ensure repairs can be made before the next practice.

Players will need to purchase for themselves:

- Cleats
- Mouthguards **\*\*It is a good idea to always have a spare**
- Girdle
- Athletic shorts and kneepads (if player chooses **not** to wear practice pants that are provided)

Respect your team and respect your equipment. These items belong to the club and are very expensive. The player **MUST** accept responsibility for the care and cleanliness of the equipment. At the end of the season all of the equipment will be professionally cleaned.

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## PARENTS' ROLE

Enthusiastic family support has been the hallmark of the Sherwood Park Northstars football team since its inception. Family involvement is strongly encouraged as it is absolutely essential to the success of our program and each of the players. In order to channel this support in a positive and effective way, it is necessary to establish clearly defined parameters and guidelines that will enable us to provide a competitive environment for our players that will enable their success and development.

A successful football experience depends on parents being proactively trained to play the right role on the parent-athlete-coach team. To that end we ask that our Northstar parents:

### **DON'T COACH**

Leave the coaching to the Coaches. This includes pre-game psyching, motivation, after game critiquing, setting goals, enforcing additional cross-training, etc.

### **SUPPORT THE COACHES**

Your Coaches are experienced. They need your support for everyone to win.

### **SUPPORT THE PROGRAM**

Get involved. Volunteer. Help out at games, fundraisers, etc.

### **BE YOUR CHILD'S BEST FAN**

Support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw love when your child performs poorly. Your child should not have to perform to win your love.

### **DO NOT BRIBE OR OFFER OTHER INCENTIVES**

Your job is not to motivate. Leave this to the coaching staff. Bribes distract your child from proper game concentration.

### **TAKE YOUR CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS TO THE APPROPRIATE PERSON**

At an appropriate time, take your concerns to the Team Manager. If you have a problem with a coach, do not go to other parents to discuss it.

**A 24 hour cooling period is often applied to allow for a productive and useful conversation in an appropriate place and outside of the moment.** Talking behind a coach's back will not get you what you want.

### **UNDERSTAND AND DISPLAY APPROPRIATE GAME BEHAVIOUR**

Remember your child's self-esteem and game performance is at stake. Be supportive and cheer but always be appropriate.



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### **MONITOR YOUR CHILD`S STRESS LEVEL AT HOME**

Keep an eye on your child to make sure he/she is effectively handling stress from the various activities in his/her life.

### **MONITOR EATING AND SLEEPING HABITS**

Be sure that your child is eating the proper foods, getting adequate nutrition and enough sleep. Both are crucial to good health.

### **HELP YOUR CHILD KEEP HIS/HER PRIORITIES STRAIGHT**

Help your child maintain a healthy focus on schoolwork, relationships and other important things in life besides football. If your child has made a commitment to football, help him/her keep the priorities around this in mind.

### **REALITY TEST YOUR CHILD**

If a player comes off the field after making a significantly good play but it ended in a negative result (i.e. other team scores), help him/her understand that this is a win. Help him/her keep things in proper perspective including losses, disappointments and failures.

### **KEEP FOOTBALL IN PERSPECTIVE**

Football should not be larger than life for you. If your child`s performance elicits strong emotions, keep these away from him/her. Remember your relationship will continue with your child long after his/her football days are over. Keep your goals and needs off the field.

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## VOLUNTEERING

The success of the team both on field and off field depends on volunteer support. Each year, the team looks for individuals to join the Executive, both from first and second year player families. This allows for a smooth transition between seasons. The following areas are open for volunteers:

- **Sticks** (home games only - on the sidelines handling down marker and yard chains)
- **Announcer** (home games only – provide play by play information for fans)
- **Spotter** (home games only - works in announcing booth with Announcer. Assists with viewing the game and providing Announcer with the names and the numbers of those players involved in plays during the game)
- **Videographer** (videos games - both home and away)
- **Jersey Washer** (take game jerseys home after each game; wash, dry and return)
- **Director At Large (Executive)**

† The following positions have been filled:

- **Trainers** (\*\*\*) this is considered 'on field staff' – we must have certified Trainers in attendance at all practices and games. Trainer certification can be obtained through courses at the Sports Medicine Council of Alberta and will be reimbursed by the club.
  - **Rosemarie Stovius**
  - **Rob Bowen**
  - **Nancy Tremblay**
  - **Brenda Oliveros**
  - **Mel Fluker**
- **Photographer** (photographs team during all games and events)
  - **Candy Chamzuk**
- **Webmaster** (update website – and possibly Facebook – with schedule information, news links or any other updates required)
  - **Randy Chamzuk**
- **Executive Members** (position in these roles are vital to the operation of the club – please speak to an Executive member for more details regarding each position.)
  - **President (Clint Byblow)**
  - **Vice President (Bernie Oliveros)**
  - **Team Manager (Brenda Oliveros)**
  - **Treasurer (Brian Ewing)**
  - **Secretary (Dayna McGeachy)**
  - **Registrar (Nancy Tremblay)**
  - **Fundraising Coordinator (Melanie Doyle)**
  - **Equipment Manager (Patrick Brown)**

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## FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is an essential component of the success of any non-profit organization. It takes a great deal of money to run a Bantam football team.

In order to have a successful fundraising season, we need strong participation from all players and parents.

The Northstars have a variety of fundraising activities planned each season. Some of the fundraising is considered 'mandatory' while others are 'optional'. The majority of activities planned for the each season are such that the players are fundraising along with the parents.

### **PLAYERS ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND AND ASSIST WITH THE FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE SILENT AUCTION**

Each year the Northstars require a volunteer commitment cheque to be handed in as part of registration. Should you not be able to volunteer for a mandatory fundraising event, then we will cash the volunteer commitment cheque for that specific time period. If you know you cannot volunteer for whatever reason, please advise the Team Manager and our Treasurer will be notified that your cheque can be cashed in a timely manner rather than by default.

## FUNDRAISING EVENTS

### **\*Silent Auction at Average Joe's Pub - Mandatory Event: \*\*over 18\*\***

Date: September 29 from 6 p.m. - 11 p.m.

Overview: This is a major team fundraiser. Northstars will sell tickets to this event. We receive some percentage of the overall drink sales in addition to the revenue generated by the sale of silent auction items.

Description of Volunteer jobs: Selling tickets prior to event – each family will be required to purchase/sell tickets for the event. There will also be volunteers required during the actual event – door, ticket sellers, auction runners, sheets pullers. A sign up list will be available.

\*\*All player families are expected to donate 1 item for the silent auction table as well as one bottle of liquor for the liquor basket draw.

**Volunteer Commitment will be complete upon donation of your items and purchase of tickets.**

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### **\*Construction Site Clean-Up - Mandatory Event - player participation**

Date: May 13 between 9am – 2pm

We receive a donation to the team from one of our sponsors for this effort.

Overview: Players and coaches work to clean a construction site in a community in Edmonton. This event is used as a team building exercise for the players, as well as an opportunity for them to volunteer and give back to a community.

**Volunteer Commitment will be complete upon participation in the event.**

### **\*Bottle Drives - Mandatory Event – player participation**

Date: During Spring Camp and one more in September

Overview: Players are asked to bring bags of empty bottles to the practice field on the specified date. Parent volunteers will keep track of the families who have donated. Bottle depot truck comes to the field and picks up the empty bottles and takes back to the depot for sorting. Cheque will be picked up at a later date. If all families participate, these can result in major revenue for the team.

**Volunteer Commitment will be complete upon participation in the event.**

### **\*Attendance at the Northstars AGM - Mandatory Event: \*\*over 18\*\***

Date: to be determined each year

Overview: This is the final parent meeting for the Northstars season and attendance is mandatory. This is required to facilitate the election of the Executive for the following year.

**Volunteer Commitment will be complete upon participation in the event.**

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Other fundraising activities will be announced as the season progresses. They may include:

- Mundare sausage selling
- Volunteering at Eskimos games

If you have any ideas or suggestions for fundraising activities, please contact our Fundraising Coordinator.

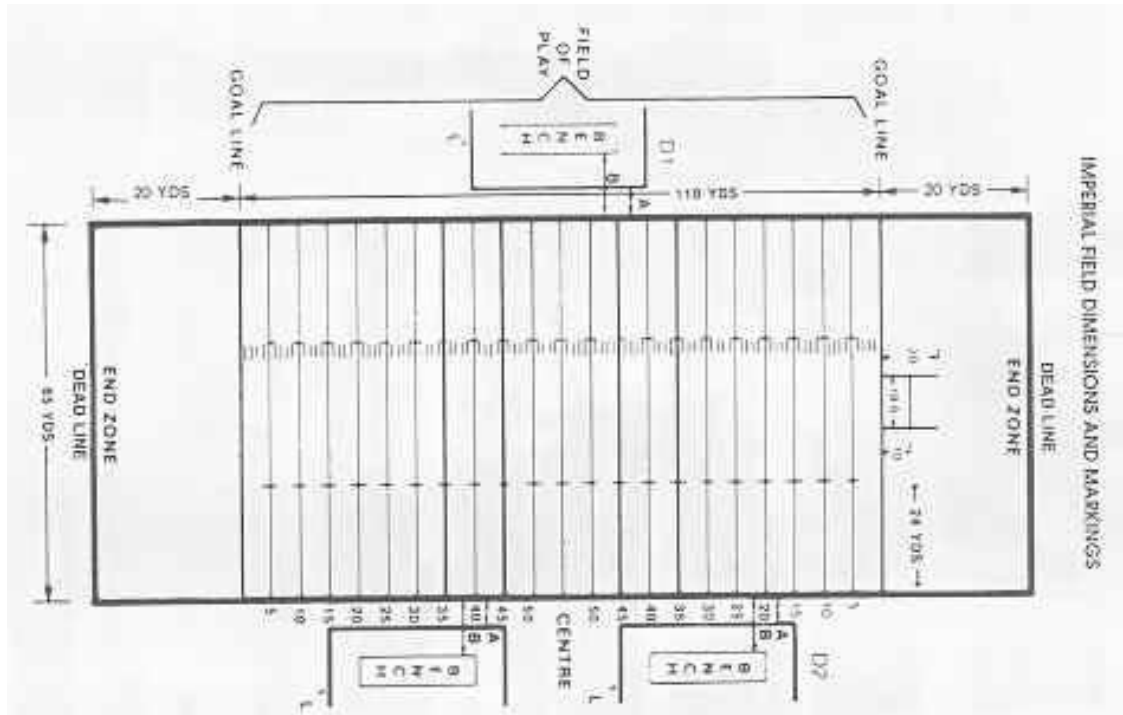


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## FOOTBALL BASIC RULES AND REGULATIONS

### Field Layout

A regulation size Canadian football field is 110 yards long from goal line to goal line and 65 yards wide. The end zones are 20 yards deep. A series of lines called the "hash marks" are marked on the field 24 yards in from each sideline and go the length of the field from goal line to goal line. When a ball carrier is tackled outside these "hash marks" or goes out of bounds, the team in possession of the ball will snap the football from the nearest hash mark.



### Objective of the Game

The basic objective of Canadian tackle football is for twelve players, through coordinated effort, to place the football, either by running or passing, into their opponents' end zone area. "Tackle Football" differs from "Touch Football" in that full contact blocking is used to aid the movement of the ball into an opponents' end zone. Tackling is generally the technique used by the defense to impede offensive progress.

### Basic Rules

The game is started by an opening kick-off and subsequent play is initiated from the point where the ball is "grounded" or where the receiving team's ball carrier is tackled. For simplicity sake, a tackle is defined as having the forward progress of the ball carrier stopped by the defense forcing one of his knees to the ground.

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## Scoring

- Touchdown: Run or pass the ball into the opponents' end zone - 6 points
- Field Goal: The ball is place-kicked between the goal post uprights, over the cross bar from anywhere on the field - 3 points
- Safety Touch: If the ball becomes dead in the end zone after having been carried, passed or kicked from the field of play into their own end zone by the offensive team - 2 points
- Convert: Following a touchdown, a team may attempt to add to its score by place-kicking the ball between the goal post uprights – 1 point; or by passing or carrying the ball into the end zone - 2 points.
  - Below the High School level, 2 points is awarded for a kicked convert and 1 point for a run or pass convert.

## Possession of the Ball

Possession means having the ball firmly held in hand or hands, arm or arms, leg or legs, or under the body

The ball is dead when:

- A field official blows the whistle
- An official has signaled a score
- The ball goes out of bounds
- A forward pass is declared incomplete
- A kicked ball strikes the opponents' goal post assembly in flight without first touching the ground, a player or an official
- The ball carrier is tackled and the forward progress has been halted
- The ball carrier behind the line of scrimmage is firmly in the grasp and control of a tackler to the extent that the ball cannot be thrown
- The ball carrier is contacted by an opponent and loses balance so that a portion of the body, other than the hands or feet touches the ground
- The quarterback, in possession of the ball, intentionally kneels on the ground during the last three minutes of the half
- The quarterback, in possession of the ball, dives in a feet first sliding motion, the ball shall be declared dead at the point it was held when another part of quarterback's body other than the hands or feet, touch the ground
- A player, having possession of the ball in own goal area, intentionally kneels on the ground
- A ball carrier is on the ground and in the judgment of the official, is not attempting to advance the ball, the official shall immediately declare the ball dead
- Striking an official only on a forward pass
- **NOTE:** A ball lying on the ground and not in possession of a player is not dead

If in any period the ball becomes dead with only a short period of time remaining, the team in possession shall be entitled to one complete play even though that play may extend beyond the normal termination of that period.

<http://footballalberta.ab.ca/main/coaching-development/tackle-football-rule-changes/>

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## OFFICIAL HAND SIGNALS



Clipping



Contacting kicker



Illegal crackback



Coin Toss Winner



Chop or cut block



Penalty declined



Delay of game



First Down Awarded



Disqualification



Face mask



Intentional  
grounding



Forward pass behind the line  
of scrimmage



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Holding



Illegal block



Illegal contact on receiver



Illegal kickoff



Illegal pass



Illegal substitution



Ineligible receiver



No Flag on the Play



Illegal interference



Too many players



No yards



Onside or lateral pass

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Objectionable conduct



Offside



Piling



Resetting the 20-second clock



Procedure



Roughing passer



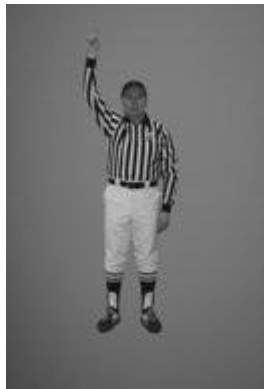
Roughing kicker



Spearing



Safety touch



Single point



Time count violation



Time in

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Touchdown



Time out



Tripping



Unnecessary roughness

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## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM FOOTBALL

### ***Breaking in the Rookies: How to deal with first time parents***

*By Tim Enger*

#### **1) Someone is going to hit your kid – and it's OK:**

"I can't believe they could do that to my child," is a popular refrain from some parents who call us up with concerns over tackling and hitting in a normal game. It's true, to someone who has raised their kids to not hit others the action at a minor football game can come as quite a shock. And it can be worse if they watch a practice where certain "pit" drills are designed to accentuate contact. But, it's OK. The equipment that the players wear is probably the best protective equipment in sport and a great deal of time is spend by the coaches on how to give and receive a hit properly. Football has its fair share of injuries, but no more than most other popular sports such as hockey, soccer, skiing, basketball, etc. We wouldn't offer this sport to kids if it was a true hazard to their health and we have over 100 years of history to back that up. Really – it's OK.

#### **2) Your kid may never see the ball – and it's OK:**

If you come from other ball or puck based, goal oriented sports, you're probably used to the fact that at some point your child will touch the basketball, puck, or soccer ball. With a limited number of people on the court, field or ice essentially doing the same athletic movements it's inevitable that at some point there is going to be contact between your child and the implement of play. It's a slam dunk guarantee in baseball where everyone, regardless of their position, gets a turn at bat. In football – not so much.

Now, there is nothing sinister about this fact, it's just reality. Of the 24 positions on a field (12 on offense and 12 on defense) at any time during a game – only 7 of them are designed to carry or receive the ball. Plus, at the younger levels anyone tagged with a "receiver" position is infinitely less likely to get any love from the ball than someone with a "running back" position. That does not mean that the other positions are useless or not important. That running back will be going nowhere unless the offensive line does its thing and does it well, and unless everyone with a defensive position works hard, your team is going to get a lot of points scored against it.

In short, football has many positions that are so disparate that we need all sorts of body types in order to play this game. That is the beauty of our sport, but please understand that more than 2/3's of the players on the field are not supposed to get the ball unless a fumble or interception is at hand. Your child may be one of them but he/she still has an important job to do to ensure the teams' success, so don't worry if they "get no touches" during a game. Really – it's OK.

#### **3) Equal playing time is a myth – and it's OK:**

I know that statement may seem cold and cruel in today's "fun first" world of youth sports, but it's also the truth, so put away those stopwatches and understand why this happens.

Coaches will bend over backwards at the younger levels to make sure that everyone sees the field for a significant period of time. But, unless you have 48 kids exactly on the roster who fit perfectly into each position it will be impossible for each kid to play exactly one half. Usually minor teams will have 25-35 players so someone is going to wind up playing the whole game while other may see only a half of play or less. Plus, you may have a scarcity of large bodies and plethora or tiny fast kids which means there might be no back-ups along a lines of play while wide receiver might be three deep on the depth chart.

To make matters more unsettling for parents, particularly with a hockey background, there are no "shifts" in football. Once an offence is on the field they get to stay on as long as they are

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making first downs or until they score. This could be less than a minute or the majority of time in a particular quarter. That quarter might also be the one in which your child was scheduled to play linebacker for that team and spent most of it on the bench waiting. This can be a source of frustration if you do not understand that there is nothing a coach can do about that, and that he has the best intentions to get your child some significant playing time but the game might not work out that way. Relax, it may go in your favor next week when your child's team's defense is on the field all day (which isn't necessarily a good thing ☺).

Some leagues have built in equal time scenarios for the youngest kids (i.e. at the Atom level in Calgary, it's 10 plays for your team then 10 plays for the other), but most don't, so if you see your child playing a regulation game and want to judge playing time – you're in for a long frustrating day. Playing time is just one of many things a coach has to coordinate in a game. Trust that he'll do his best and just relax and enjoy the game. Really – it's OK.

### **4) You can't rotate positions – and it's OK:**

"My kid would like to try quarterback this week." Nothing can send shivers up the spine of a minor football coach more than hearing that from the father or mother of one of his offensive linemen. And it happens more than you think.

People don't usually start their kids in football until later on in a youth sport context (i.e. 10 years or older), whereas they may have had their son or daughter in soccer or hockey since they were 4. At the youngest levels of other sports it's quite common for kids to play right wing one game then defenseman the next, or even to go from catcher to shortstop between innings. That's because even though there are noticeable differences in those positions they are essentially doing the same thing (i.e. moving a puck or catching a baseball) and are similar enough to allow kids to experiment with most or all of the positions while learning the basic skills of the game.

Unfortunately the same is not true in football. While some positions, mostly on defense, have similar duties (i.e. tackling), most like quarterback and offensive lineman have completely different job descriptions and therefore have a completely different basic skill set and need to be instructed completely differently. This may help you understand why we have a large number of coaches with your child's team. There are at least seven different base positions (i.e. quarterback, running back, receiver, offensive line, defensive line, linebacker, and defensive back) that need to have separate instructions.

Therefore, just like in other sports, it takes time and practice to pick up the basic skills, so moving around from position to position means that they will have to start all over again each time they move since the basic skills differ greatly from position to position and as a result will have a very hard time improving at anything. Again, as mentioned above, not everyone gets to do everything, but if you take the time to understand the team nature of the game and that no one person is successful without the 11 other players on field with him doing their jobs to the utmost, then you can relax when your told your child is a tight end or safety. Really – it's OK.

### **5) Baby, it's cold outside – and it's OK:**

With apologies to Dean Martin that statement is true as can be in these northern climes. Football is a sport that is played – plain and simple. Only extreme cold (like minus 30 type stuff) or electrical storms are supposed to stop the playing of it. Also, contrary to the way most City Recreation Departments operate their field usage – you're supposed to play in the rain too.

This is hard for many people to wrap around their minds and believe me, we in the sport know how unpleasant it can be out there in our province, but again that is one of the beautiful things about our sport. You are not going to melt if you get rained on, and you won't freeze either in the snow. Sports like baseball have to cancel in the rain because you cannot see or grip the ball properly in a downpour and that gets dangerous. Not in football, we can play it in any conditions. In a small way it's a great learning experience to have to do something hard (i.e. laying down a block) in adverse conditions (i.e. rain). With so many character building opportunities being removed from the youth

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of today this is one we're proud to remain with our sport. Plus, you need to understand that strategy learned in practice is infinitely more important in football than it is in more free flowing sports such as basketball or hockey. Therefore, your kid needs to BE THERE, or don't even dream of complaining about lack of playing time.

Now, rest assured that on cold days most teams or leagues will take it upon themselves to provide heaters on the sidelines for players and coaches will properly instruct the players on how to dress for the cold. As well, yes, the fields do get harder and possibly icy when they freeze, but correspondingly the speed at which the game gets played slows down along with the force of the hitting. Remember, the players are wearing the best equipment to deal with contact that is available and that includes contact with the ground. Therefore, know that unless you're notified in advance all practice and games will take place as scheduled come rain, sleet, snow and wind. Buy that umbrella and stock up on hand warmers early – because we live in Alberta, not California. Really – it's OK.

### **6) Things that look bad that aren't – and it's OK:**

Passing judgment on others is almost a cottage industry in the world of minor sports. Apparently most youth sports are crawling with unethical, mean spirited, no nothing coaches whose only desire is to demean and embarrass kids at any cost. Or, at least that's what we hear. The truth is, obviously, that volunteer coaches are no more perfect than the next person, but realistically we feel they need to be given more of the benefit of the doubt than they have been in recent years. Again, it is probably due to lack of experience with the game that causes the misunderstandings that drive the complaints. This is not to say that there might be some legitimate complaints that have merit, but here are a few situations that may look a lot worse than they are and like we said above may need some benefit of the doubt given before calling in the cops:

**a) Yelling** – Let's state it clearly right up front that profanity has no place in the game, regardless of the level of play. It is the refuge of a weak mind and by all means if your child's coach is using it like an adverb you have every right to ask him to tone it down. However, this may not apply to yelling in general. Football is loud game by nature and with many player spread out over a large area the raising of voices comes naturally. Corrective statements, encouragement, instructions all can come across loudly and could seem rather brusque. This doesn't necessarily make it bad. Yelling in the heat of battle may come with heightened emotions, but unless they are singling out your child with some choice words you can't say on TV, let it be. It's been a part of the game forever, & adds to the passion.

**b) Benchings** – So, what do **you** do with your child when he or she misbehaves? Coaches have few options when it comes to players stepping over the line either in their deportment on field or their behavior towards opponents, officials, teammates or coaches. The most popular of these options is "benching" or not allowing the player to continue playing. If you notice your child is in one of these situations, we're not asking you to totally take the coaches side but simply think it through in that a coach wouldn't take such drastic measures unless something truly untoward has happened. At the end of the day, he is responsible for the behavior and operation of the team – just like you are in your house with your family – so unless you want to be grilled every time you send a child to their room for misbehaving, cut the coach some slack and realize that there is more than likely a legitimate reason for his decision. Everyone loves their children but if you're honest with yourself you'll realize that they too are not perfect and entirely capable of making a mistake or choosing an inappropriate attitude (Lord knows mine do ☺). Talk with the coach if you wish but a confrontational attitude will not make the situation any better. There may be many reasons for a child to not be getting onto on field up to and including having the player tell the coaches he doesn't want to play anymore (which happens more than you think at the Atom level). All we're saying is jumping to the conclusion that the coach "has it in" for your child is probably the least likely scenario taking place.

## Sherwood Park Northstars

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**c) Blowouts** – “That @#\$%& coach is running up the score against our team on purpose!” Happens all the time - right? One of the downsides to football is that blowouts do happen, and it’s too bad but

it is a reality. Sometimes, a coach or coaching staff will come along and develop a team into a well-oiled machine. Add some talented players and you’ve got a juggernaut capable of scoring bundles of points and shutting out opponents at will. Due to the nature of the game, the numbers it takes to field a team and the short season there is very little “tiering” that can take place to balance competition that you might be used to in other sports. As a result there is normally only one level of play for your child’s team, therefore you get to experience the good, the bad, and the ugly teams all on the basis of proximity. Therefore, there might be a 50-0 game on your horizon with the score not in your favor. What we’re asking for is that before you leap to a negative conclusion you may consider that the coach of the winning team in that circumstance might not be the devil you take him for. In fact – he just might be a very good coach doing a great job with the kids he’s coaching.

Having said that, here are some things to look for in a blowout situation that can give you a clue to whether the opposition (or in some cases your team), is doing all they can to keep the score differential from becoming worse. A good measuring stick is what happens once a team is up by 30 or more points in the second half. Are they:

- **Substituting freely?** The most noticeable subs will be a quarterback and running back and should be of lesser talent than the starters.
- **Running in between the tackles?** What this means is, are their offensive plays run mainly between the ends of the offensive line where there is the best chance for the defense to limit the gain.
- **Punting on third and short?** Sure they could probably get the first down if they went for it with one or two yards to go, but instead they punt.
- **Not passing or taking any timeouts?** These are clock stoppers and prolong the game. Good coaches know this and will avoid this at all costs.
- **Calling off the dogs?** No more blitzing on “D”.

It may well be that the scoring will continue because the subs that are now in the game are still going to be trying their best, however if you notice the above situations taking place it’s best just to shrug and think about getting them next time, because the coach on the high end of the score is honestly doing what he can to keep things down. Now, if you notice that the starters are still on the field, the offense is passing like crazy and their bench is still cheering lustily once the score reaches 70-0 feel free to express your opinion, but normally the coach on the winning side of the ball is just a good man who has done a very good job developing a team. He shouldn’t be demonized for being successful and nothing will be gained from organizing the rest of the villagers to take up pitchforks and torches against him. Sometimes you’re the bug and sometimes you’re the windshield. Take your child and some teammates out for a treat after the game and all will be forgotten. Really – it’s OK.

In closing, it must be mentioned again that not everyone is perfect, and that includes you, me, and every coach your child will experience. As well, some coaches may have ways of operating their teams that you might find distasteful just in general. It happens, but as long as he has been up front about the way things are going to be (i.e. in regards to playing time, behavior expectations, etc.) and is following through on what he had said, nothing can be gained by a confrontation or complaint. If it’s not your cup of tea your only two choices are to remove your child from the team or simply agree to disagree. Nobody gets into coaching to harm or demean kids. You wouldn’t – so to assume that others would is kind of out there. So relax, enjoy the sport for what it has to offer. If your child is coming home each day claiming that he or she is enjoying the experience then don’t sweat the small stuff. Join in, participate, rise and fall with the team and you won’t regret it. Thanks for signing your child up to play and we look forward to having him/her as a part of our family!