



YOUTH FOOTBALL COACHES HANDBOOK

www.BFAwolfpack.com

The Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack is a safe, professionally operated 501c3 football mentorship program for at-risk boys ages 5-14 years old in the Baltimore, MD area that teaches young people self-discipline, leadership, focus, academic empowerment, team work, respect within a positive peer culture using the sport of football.

Dedication This handbook is dedicated to the hardworking volunteer coaches and mentors who make our football program possible. We appreciate the time, effort, and dedication you give to the children of Baltimore. The staff of Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack offers many thanks for helping us provide this opportunity to the youth of our city and surrounding counties. We hope that you find this handbook helpful in your coaching endeavors.

Many Thanks!

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Mission Statement

The Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack was created to provide high quality, diverse and accessible programs, services and facilities that enhance the quality of life for all ages, cultures, and abilities.

Philosophy

The game of football is just a game. The number one reason (well documented in a number of studies) children participate in youth sports is to have fun. If you take the fun out of sports, you take the child out of sports. It is detrimental to the player if there is too much pressure placed on them too early to achieve a result rather than simply experiencing the sheer joy of a youth game. As a coach you want to create a stress-free relaxed environment for your team. Let your kids know that it is okay to make mistakes. Get to know your kids individually and determine what they need to be successful. For some kids it might be a specific skill. For others it might be encouragement or even something as simple as acknowledgment.

Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization is not about how many wins or losses are accumulated! Proper football development is achieved by children participating in age appropriate activities so that they are able to experience, comprehend, and execute the game as it relates to where they are in their cognitive development. It is achieved by all of the team members receiving equal playing time. It is achieved by teaching the skills, rules and vocabulary of the game. Finally, it is achieved by teaching sportsmanship, self-discipline, teamwork and life skills. Learning about winning and losing, playing by the rules, and respecting an opponent are just as important as learning football skills.

The Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization wants you to respect the game of football, respect the players, the opponents, the referee, and the parents. Go about your teachings in a thorough, positive, yet humble manner. Players should come out of their experience with the coach as better people and better citizens, not just better football players.

Role of the Coach

As a coach in youth sports, one must assume the responsibility of ensuring that each participant has an enjoyable and safe experience learning football. To fulfill these responsibilities, a coach must wear many different hats. Listed below are some prominent roles a coach may take on.

Facilitator

- Set up the conditions and environment for learning.
- Give only positive feedback (sarcasm and negativity should never occur).
- Encourage players to give each other positive feedback.
- Coaches should be enthusiastic, organized, patient, sincere, and fair.
- Practices should be conducted in the spirit of enjoyment and learning.

- De-emphasize winning and losing and emphasize sportsmanship and fun.
- Invite parents to help and participate. Positive Role Model
- Work with all players equally.
- Treat each team member with equal regard and respect.
- Demonstrate respect for opponents, referees, parents, spectators, opposing coaches, and opposing players.
- Show respect and responsibility for the game of football. Understand who you are coaching
- Children are not defined by chronological age only.
- Each child matures and develops at a different pace.
- Treat each child as a unique individual.
- All activities should be age appropriate.
- Recognize that kids participate for different reasons. Some may be there because their older siblings play and it is expected in their family that they play. Some may play because they have a parent that is a frustrated athlete and wants to live through their child. Some may play because all their friends do, and they want to be with them. Others may play because they love football.

“THERE IS NO GREATER GIFT THAN THAT OF A GOOD COACH” Bruce Brown (Former college coach)

Coaches' Responsibilities and Guidelines

Coaches are role models for teaching the fundamentals of the sport, sport skills, tactics and sportsmanship. Coaches are responsible for their personal conduct and behavior, as well as, the conduct and behavior of players. Coaches are required to follow the Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization guidelines at all times. A coach who does not follow the guidelines provided by the Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization will need to meet with the CEO/Director in order to continue to coach. All volunteer coaches shall be “at will coaches,” and may be discharged by the Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization with or without cause. Only coaches who have been approved by Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization will be allowed to go on the field of play or court during practices and games.

Responsibilities and Guidelines Coaches participating in Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization shall:

- Be reliable, and on time. (The first to arrive and the last to leave...)
- Be responsible for distributing a game/practice schedule to parents/guardians prior to the beginning of the season.
- Have with you, at all practices and games, the Emergency Contact Information forms for each child on the team.

- Be responsible for making sure first aid kits are on-site at every practice and game. Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization will supply these kits.
 - Be responsible for ensuring players' parents/guardians are informed of changes to the game or practice schedule. This includes cancellations the day of the game or practice.
 - Ensure that each player receives playing time in games according to Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization policy on playing time. Equal participation in the program as a whole is the desired goal.
 - Be responsible for communicating Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization playing time policy as well as their own philosophy regarding playing time to parents/guardians & athletes prior to the start of the season.
 - Have all players and team coaches shake hands after the completion of the game.
 - Never play an injured or bleeding player. Think of the player first and not the team's final outcome.
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- Conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times, and shall refrain from directing abusive or sarcastic language or gestures toward officials, other coaches or players.
 - Conduct themselves professionally at all times with parents and spectators. There is a NO FRATERNIZATION policy with all staff and the parents/guardians or relatives of our players.
 - Serve as a role model for players and spectators.
 - Ensure that Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization equipment is accounted for, and maintained in usable condition and returned promptly at the end of the season.
 - Leave facilities in the same or better condition than they were when the team arrived.

Coaches' Code of Conduct & Code of Ethics

I will honor the fact that youth sports exist for youth, not adults.

Expected Behavior:

- Maintaining a positive, helpful and supportive attitude.
- Exercising your authority/influence to control behavior of fans and spectators.
- Exhibiting gracious acceptance of defeat or victory.
- Accepting and adhering to all league rules and policies related to participation of adults and youth. Playing all players according to the equal participation rules established by the league and the follow the spirit of those rules.
- Fulfilling the expected role of a youth coach to adopt a "children first" philosophy.
- Allowing and encouraging the players to listen, learn and play hard within the rules.

- Placing emphasis on fun, participation and team. I will do my very best to make youth sports fun for my child and other children involved.

Expected Behavior:

- Recognizing the differences of each child and treating each player as an individual while demonstrating concern for their individual needs and well-being.
- Encouraging all players, regardless of skill level, to be included as a member of the team.
- Recognizing that some physical tasks, drills and demands are not appropriate for all youth.
- Recognizing that youth may vary greatly in physical, social and emotional maturation and considering these factors when setting up competitions and when interacting with youth. I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.

Expected Behavior:

- Establishing practice plans that are interesting, varied, productive and aimed at improving all players skills and individual abilities.
- Devoting appropriate time to the individual improvement of each player.
- Conducting practices of reasonable length and intensity appropriate for the age and conditioning of the players. I will exercise good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players & officials at every game, practice or other sports event.

Expected Behavior:

- Adopting the position, teaching and demonstrating that it is our basic moral code to treat others as we would like to be treated.
- Abiding by and supporting the rules of the game as well as the spirit of the rules.
- Providing an environment conducive to fair and equitable competition.
- Using the influential position of youth coach as an opportunity to promote, teach and expect fair sportsmanship and fair play.

I will make sure all children play in a safe, healthy environment.

Expected Behavior:

- Maintaining a high level of awareness of potentially unsafe conditions.
- Protecting players from sexual molestations, assault, physical abuse and emotional abuse.
- Correcting or avoiding unsafe practice or playing conditions.
- Using appropriate safety equipment necessary to protect all players.

- Seeing that the players are provided with adequate adult supervision while under the coach's care.

I will insist that my team exercise good sportsmanship toward coaches, officials, fans, and other players.

Expected Behavior:

- Becoming knowledgeable, understanding and supportive of all applicable game rules, league rules, regulations and policies.
- Teaching and requiring compliance of these rules among players, so that with this understanding good sportsmanship can be maintained.
- Teaching techniques that reduce risk of injury to both the coach's own players and their opponents.
- Discouraging illegal contact or intentional dangerous play and administering swift and equitable discipline to players involved in such activity.

I will provide a sports environment for my team that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol.

I will refrain from their use at all Ayden Arts and Recreation Department youth sports events.

Expected Behavior:

- Being alcohol and drug free at all team activities or in the presence of players.
- Refraining from the use of any type of tobacco products at all team activities or in the presence of your players
- Refraining from providing any type of alcohol, drug or tobacco products to any of your players
- Encouraging parents to refrain from the public use of tobacco products or alcohol at team activities.

I will place the safety and physical development of my players ahead of my personal desire to win.

Expected Behavior:

- Using appropriate language in appropriate tones when interacting with league officials, players, game officials, parents and spectators. At no time is profanity acceptable.
- Including all players in team activities without regard to race, religion, sex, body type, national origin, ancestry, disability, ability or any other legally protected classification
- Treating all players, league officials, game officials, parents, and spectators with dignity and respect.

- Playing all players according to the equal participation rules established by the league and the playing by the spirit of those rules.
- Encouraging youth to participate in other sports and activities to promote all aspects of their development.
- Allowing reasonable absences from practices. I will support other coaches and league officials.

Expected Behavior:

- I will back and support league officials and coaches when working with my players and parents. I will enforce league rules.
- If I have concerns or questions, I will direct them to recreation staff or coach at an appropriate time, not during a practice or game. I will not criticize another coach, an official, or a recreation staff in front of my players or parents.
- I will cooperate and offer assistance whenever I can. I will remember that children play, referees call, fans cheer and coaches TEACH. Anytime someone steps out of their area of responsibility, a strain is created on every other areas involved.

Offense & Penalty

Coaches may not conduct themselves in an unsportsmanlike manner at any time and may be removed from the coaching staff if they do. Regardless of the situation, we expect our coaches to act with the upmost respect and integrity in any scenario.

- Offense ejected from a game
- Penalty Not necessarily proceeded by a warning...immediate ejection, removal from the premises and a minimum One (1) game suspension.
- Offense Failure to follow established guidelines, rules, policies and procedures as applicable to related sport
- Penalty Not necessarily proceeded by a warning...immediate ejection, removal from the premises and a minimum One (1) game suspension.
- Offensive malicious obscene/profane/vulgar verbal abuse directed towards another individual.
- Penalty Not necessarily proceeded by a warning...immediate ejection, removal from the premises and a minimum two (2) day suspension. This includes regular and tournament games, practices, award ceremonies or any other Ayden Recreation Department function(s).
- Offense Physical aggression towards another; pushing, shoving, striking or touching another individual.
- Penalty Not necessarily proceeded by a warning...immediate ejection, removal from the premises and a minimum five (5) years suspension. This includes regular and tournament games, practices, award ceremonies or any other Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization function(s).

- Offense Any violation of Maryland law; possession of firearms, knives, explosive devices weapons or under the influence of alcohol, narcotics, controlled substances, chemical or drug paraphernalia; assault with or without a weapon.
- Penalty Not necessarily proceeded by a warning...immediate ejection, removal from the premises and a minimum five (5) years suspension. This includes regular and tournament games, practices, award ceremonies or any other Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization function(s).

Youth Sports Players

A growing body of research literature finds that in addition to improved physical health, sport plays a primarily positive role in youth development, including improved academic achievement, higher self-esteem, fewer behavioral problems, and better psychosocial. Many studies focus on the effects of sport on the five “C’s” competence, confidence, connections, character, and caring, which are considered critical components of positive youth development. It has long been thought that the many facets of playing sport—the discipline of training, learning teamwork, following the leadership of coaches and captains, learning to lose, provide lifelong skills for athletes.

Four Truths about Children and Sports

- Fun is pivotal. If it isn’t fun, children will drop out of sports.
- Skill development is a crucial aspect of fun.
- Intrinsic rewards (self-knowledge that grows out of self-competition) are more important in creating lifetime athletes than are extrinsic rewards (victory or attention from others).
- The most rewarding challenges of sports are those that lead to increased self-knowledge, self-improvement, self-confidence, and self-esteem

Age Group Characteristics

Before you are able to effectively coach the children that have been entrusted to your care, you need to understand the characteristics of whom you are developing. It is imperative that you understand that when you are dealing with children that you take the time to comprehend where they are currently in their own development.

Ages 7 - 9

This is the stage where players begin to understand the concept of passing to a teammate. From a physical standpoint they still lack a sense of pace and tend to exert themselves hard and then drop. They are now starting to develop some physical confidence in themselves and they are still into running,

climbing, rolling and jumping. From a mental perspective they feel if they tried hard then they performed well (regardless of the activity's outcome). They are beginning to show a limited ability to tend to more than one task at a time. From a social perspective they have a great need for approval from adults and like to show off individual skills. Negative comments carry great weight. Their playmates start to emerge and they will start to move towards small groups. They want everyone to like them at this age. You should be positive with everything that you do.

Ages 10 – 12

Children at this age are on the edge of childhood and adolescence. It can present a multitude of problems, but also an abundance of potential.

From a physical standpoint strength and power become a major factor in their performance. Their muscles mature and they realize how much more they can do on the court. Their coordination significantly improves and it shows up in the execution of a child's technical ability.

From a mental perspective they can sequence thoughts and perform complex tasks. A coach can expect his players to understand the game and use teammates to solve problems. They are usually eager to learn.

From a social perspective whether a child enters puberty early or late is significant. Girls tend to form cliques while boys take a more broad approach to team relationships. The manner in which they feel about themselves can determine how they relate to their teammates. Sometimes popularity influences self-esteem.

Ages 13 - 14

From a physical standpoint they are experiencing many physical changes. They are entering puberty where boys' voices are changing; they are experiencing a growing spurt.

From a mental perspective they are expanding to include more abstract thinking. They are beginning to understand cause and effect and are ready for more in-depth and more long-term experiences. They also like to set goals based on their needs and interests. They are also moving from fantasy to reality where their life goals or career are concerned.

From a social perspective a child at this age is transitioning into involvement with opposite sex groups. They are more interested in what their peers say than their parents' advice. They do search for adult role models outside of their parents.

Players' Responsibilities and Expectations

Participation in youth sports programs can have a lasting and meaningful effect on children's lives. Therefore, it is the goal of the Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization to provide the highest quality of athletic programs to ensure that a child's experience with sports is a positive one.

It takes the cooperation of everyone involved, including the participant, to make this happen the Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization has established the following responsibilities for participants to adhere to:

- Players will listen to their coaches and be respectful of their elders.
- Players will take care of the facilities, equipment, and uniforms which they are given or participate in.
- Players will make sure to eat the right foods and drink plenty of water before and after practices and games.
- Players will avoid all types of taunting and belittling remarks to their teammates or opponents.
- Players will show good sportsmanship at all times, win or lose.
- Players will not make sports a priority over schoolwork or family.
- Players will participate for the love of the game and social interaction with peers.

Players Code of Ethics

Players are expected to conduct themselves in a positive manner regarding their youth sports experience and accept responsibility for their participation by following the Players Code of Ethics Pledge:

- I will encourage good sportsmanship from fellow players, coaches, officials, and parents at every game and practice by demonstrating good sportsmanship.
- I will attend every practice and game that I can, and will notify my coach if I cannot.
- I will expect to receive a fair and just amount of playing time.
- I will do my very best to listen and learn from my coaches.
- I will treat my coaches, other players, officials and fans with respect regardless of race, gender, creed or abilities, and I will expect to be treated accordingly.
- I deserve to have fun during my sports experience and will alert parents or coaches if it stops being fun!
- I deserve to play in an environment that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol and expect adults to refrain from their use at all youth sporting events.
- I will encourage my parents to be involved with my team in some capacity because it's important to me.
- I will do my very best in school.
- I will remember that sports are an opportunity to learn and have fun.

Offense & Penalty

Players may not conduct themselves in an unsportsmanlike manner at any time and may be removed from the league if they do. Regardless of the situation, we expect our players to act with the upmost respect and integrity in any scenario.

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 - o Penalty Not necessarily proceeded by a warning...immediate ejection, removal from the premises and a minimum five (5) years suspension. This includes regular and tournament games, practices, award ceremonies or any other the Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization function.

Player Safety

As a volunteer coach you will have the care, custody, and control of someone else's children. In this capacity you have the potential to create and to prevent accidents and injuries.

- You must provide adequate supervision to your players. The health and safety of your team members are entrusted to your care. You must provide adequate supervision to avoid foreseeable accidents and injuries. NEVER leave players unattended! NEVER leave after a game or practice until all parents or guardians have arrived!

- Evaluate your players and determine any limitations that they may have. Be sure players are physically and mentally capable of performing the e required skills. Evaluate injuries as they occur and determine if it is safe for the player to play.
- If any minor or major injuries occur, always fill out an accident report and give it to a recreation staff member.

Care and Prevention of Injuries

The first line of defense in the treatment of injuries is to prevent them. Factors that can prevent injuries are:

- The proper use of equipment
- No jewelry allowed
- Make sure there is ample water and rest periods
- Make sure players don't return too early from an injury

The care of an injured athlete should begin the moment an injury occurs. Immediate care will reduce the severity of the injury and possibility of long-term disability. Upon seeing an injured player on the court, a coach should:

- Stay composed
- Determine if a player is conscious and coherent (if not, dial 911)
- Question the player in regards to the injury
- Avoid moving the player if it appears major in any way
- Inspire confidence and reassure the player
- Determine how the injury occurred After determining that an injury is not life threatening, the nature of an injury can be further determined. Note the position of the injured part. Is it swollen or deformed? Compare the injury with the uninjured opposite body part. Do not move the injured part.

PLANNING FOR THE SEASON

Holding a pre-season parent meeting is beneficial for the parents, players and coach. Take this opportunity to inform parents of the goals and expectations as outlined in the Youth Tackle Football Coaches' Manual.

Parent Orientation Meeting

All Coaches are encouraged to establish effective lines of communication with the team parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This may take the form of a casual discussion at your first practice. The time you invest will pay dividends for all concerned throughout the season. If a meeting is impossible, then the following information could be put in a letter to parents/players. But, a face-to-face meeting is preferred.

Purpose of a Parent Orientation Meeting

- Enables parents to understand the objectives of the team.
- Allows parents to become acquainted with you, the coach.
- Inform parents about the nature (and inherent risks) of the sport.
- Articulate your expectations of them and of their children.
- Enables you to address any parents' concerns.
- Establishes clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players.
- Allows you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, etc.).
- Designate a "Team Mom" to arrange a schedule for snacks and refreshments for each game.

Important Points to Cover

- Introduce yourself and assistant coaches (or ask for volunteers at this time).
- Give background information about yourself (why you are coaching, experience)
- Coaching philosophy
- Discuss the value of the sport and the health benefits to the children.
- Discuss the philosophy of age-appropriate activities.
- State the importance you assign to having fun and developing technique.
- State how you evaluate player development through skills and not winning.
- Discuss any team rules and guidelines.
- Let them know that all players will receive equal playing time.
- Discuss how players must respect opponents, coaches, officials, and the game itself.
- Briefly discuss rules of the game.

Complaints/Ineligible

Complaint against Officials, Supervisors Procedures

Complaints concerning officials, supervisors, and other aspects of the program can be made in writing at any time after the game has been played.

The Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization will not recognize protests that will alter the scores or outcomes of games.

Players/Forfeits

Requests for determining eligibility of a player can be made at any point during the season by head coaches. When requesting the inquiry, coach must give players known name, jersey number, and team for which he/she participated. Teams will forfeit all games in which an ineligible player participates.

Complaint against Coach Procedures

This section outlines the procedures the Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization will use when the Department receives a complaint against a coach in an Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization program.

- Gather information and document eyewitness accounts of the event(s) that took place from interested parties involved to determine if a violation of the letter or intent of the Coaches' Code of Ethics Pledge has occurred. This may include the officials, other coaches, parents and children.
- Require the coach to attend a meeting with the Athletics Director to address the complaint and to offer his/her side of the incident. This meeting will be documented.
- Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization has the authority to determine the severity of the situation and whether or not the affected coach has violated the expected behaviors outlined under each of the canons of the Code of Ethics Pledge.
- Baltimore Football Academy Wolfpack organization's Athletics Director has the authority to enforce the appropriate range of disciplinary actions outlined in Offense & Penalty section of this manual



NOTICE OF RECEIPT & RECEIVING COACHES HANDBOOK

Having read and agreed with the rules, regulations, expectations, policies and procedures of The Baltimore Football Academy Inc, the league and all affiliated organizations, I sign this notice of receiving The Baltimore Football Academy Handbook with the intent of performing my duties in a professional manner, conducting myself appropriately at all times and will perform my duties the best of my ability at all times.

_____ Date: _____
Print Full Legal Name Signature

_____ Date: _____
Witness – Print Full Legal Name Signature