

FOOTBALL RISK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT CAUTIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT/ATHLETES AND PARENT/GUARDIAN(S)

The following procedures have been developed for the De Soto High School Football program. Because of the strength, endurance, conditioning and physical demands required, student-athletes and their parent/guardian(s) are asked to read, understand and adhere to the following cautions and responsibilities to enhance the safety and enjoyment of the sport of football by participants. The De Soto School District Co-Curricular Code; the De Soto High School Code of Conduct; Football Team Rules and Procedures; along with adhering to W.I.A.A. (Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association) and N.F.H.S. (National Federation of High School) Rules are expectations and responsibilities of the student-athlete and parent/guardian. The student-athletes and parent/guardian(s) are responsible to become familiar with and adhere to the above-mentioned codes, rules and procedures in accordance with this risk acknowledgement statement.

Football is classified as a collision sport and injuries may occur. The coaches working in our program are well-qualified, professional people. Fundamentals related to playing football will continually and repeatedly be emphasized on and off the field. The information contained within this list of rules and procedures is to inform the athletes in our football program of the proper techniques to practice for maximum safety in the contact phase of the game. The following procedures have been developed for the De Soto High School football teams.

Pre-season Preparation

- ▶ Because football is a collision sport, athletes must condition to prepare themselves for the season. This includes both strength training as well as aerobic training. It is also important that athletes continue to strength train during their season to help prevent injuries. Athletes should focus on developing muscular strength, endurance, cardiovascular fitness and flexibility. Weight training and strength conditioning programs have been developed for athletes pertaining to their specific sport. The weight room is open year-round to offer opportunities for training and conditioning. Athletes must adhere to the safety procedures when working out in the weight room.
- ▶ Athletes need to incorporate the basic food groups and have a diet high in complex carbohydrates. A vitamin supplement (approved by your physician), fluids, regular rest, proper nutrition and dress contribute to the maintenance of health.

Preparation for Practice or Contest

- Prior to the first day of practice, athletes must turn in to the Activities Office a completed: 1) physical/alternate year card, 2) insurance card, 3) risk acknowledgement form, and 4) co-curricular code card.
- Athletes with seizure, neuromuscular, renal, cardiac, insulin/diabetic, or chronic skeletal problems, respiratory diseases, disorders or diseases, must present a physician's approval prior to participation in any practice session.
- It is the responsibility of the student athlete and parent to report to the coach and the athletic trainer any medical condition and/or medication the student may require during the course of the activity inclusive but not limited to practice, travel, games/performances.
- Athletes who are ill, dizzy, or lightheaded should not practice and should contact their coach and athletic trainer.
- Any injury problem or concern should be discussed with the coach and athletic trainer.
- Athletes needing preventive taping or bracing should arrive early to receive treatment. Athletes need to wear all pads, braces and supportive undergarments to all practices and competitions.
- Athletes with visual impairments must wear shatterproof glasses or lenses where judgment or safety is a problem. Glasses must be mounted in break resistant frames and secured with an elastic strap.
- Horseplay, roughhousing, hazing or initiations is prohibited.
- Athletes must remove all jewelry and metal hair fasteners.
- Weight training and strength training may be a requirement for physical preparation. Athletes should observe all weight room policies for progressions, spotting and general safety.
- Athletes should ingest the equivalent of 4-6 glasses of water each day.
- Athletes should think safety first.
- Athletes should always be aware of the proximity of others when executing large motor movements.
- Athletes should always use proper technique.
- Weight control or weight reduction programs should not be undertaken without the approval of the coach, athletic trainer and personal physician.

Tackling, Blocking, and Running the Ball

By rule, the helmet is not to be used as a "ram." Initial contact is not to be made with the helmet. It is NOT possible to play the game safely or correctly without making contact with the helmet when properly blocking and tackling an opponent. Therefore, technique is most important to prevention of injuries.

Tackling and blocking techniques are basically the same. Contact is to be made above the waist, but not initially with the helmet. The player should always be in a position of balance, knees bent, back straight, body slightly bent forward, head up, assume a striking position or near to the opponent as possible with the main contact being made with the shoulder.

Blocking and tackling by not putting the helmet as close to the body as possible could result in shoulder injury such as a separation or a pinched nerve in the neck area. The dangers of not following the proper techniques can be from minor to disabling to even death. The reason for following the safety rules in making contact with the upper body and helmet is that improper body alignment can put the spinal column in a vulnerable position for injury.

If the head is bent downward, the cervical (neck) vertebrae are vulnerable and contact on the TOP OF THE HELMET could result in a dislocation, nerve damage, paralysis or death. If the back is not straight, the thoracic (mid-back) and lumbar vertebrae are also vulnerable to serious injury if contact is again made to the TOP OF THE HELMET. De Soto's daily workout includes isometric type exercises; the development of strength in the neck muscles is one of the best methods of preventing head injury and enabling an individual to hold his head up even after getting tired during a workout or contest.

Basic Hitting (Contact) Position and Fundamental Technique

If the knees are not bent, the chance of knee injury is greatly increased. Fundamentally a player should be in the proper hitting position at all times during live ball play and this point will be repeated continually during practice. The danger is anything from strained muscles, to ankle injuries, to serious knee injuries requiring surgery. The rules have made blocking below the waist (outside a two-yard by four-yard area next to the football) illegal. A runner with the ball, however, may be tackled around the legs.

The length of cleats has been restricted to no more than 1/2 inch to further help in preventing knee injuries.

In tackling, the rules prohibit initial contact with the helmet or grabbing the facemask or edge of the helmet. These restrictions were implemented because of serious injuries resulting from grasping the facemask. Initial helmet contact could result in a bruise, dislocation, broken bone, head injury, internal injury such as kidneys, spleen, bladder, etc. Grabbing the facemask or helmet edge could result in a neck injury, which could range from a muscle strain to a dislocation, nerve injury, or spinal column damage causing paralysis or death.

Illegal and dangerous play by participating athletes will not be tolerated and all players are repeatedly reminded of the dangers of these acts.

Fitting and Use of Equipment

Shoulder pads, helmets, hip pads, pants including thigh pads and knee pads should be properly fitted and worn. Wear all protective pads, braces and supportive undergarments to all practices and competitions. Shoulder pads, which are too small, will leave the shoulder joint vulnerable to bruises or separations and could also be too tight in the neck area resulting in a possible pinched nerve. Shoulder pads which are too large will leave the neck area poorly protected and will slide on the shoulders making them vulnerable to bruises or separations.

Helmets must fit snugly at the contact points: Front, back, and top of head. The helmet must be "NOCSAE" branded; the chinstraps must be fastened, and the cheek pads must be of the proper thickness. On contact, a helmet that is too tight could result in a headache. Too loose a fit could result in headaches, a concussion, a face injury such as a broken nose or cheek bone, and a blow to the back of the neck could cause a neck injury, possibly quite serious such as paralysis or even death.

Cautions specific to Football

1. **The Head and Helmet**
 - a. Tackle or block or break tackles with the shoulder pad or use the hands as specified by NFHS rules. NEVER USE THE HELMET TO STRIKE THE OPPONENT.
 - b. Keep the chin and eyes up when blocking, tackling, or running with the ball. Lowering the head/helmet jeopardizes the neck and spinal cord.
 - c. Lowering the head/helmet jeopardizes the neck and spinal cord.
 - d. Players should inspect the helmet before or after practice. Coaches or trained professionals should check helmets on a weekly basis.
2. **Blocking and Defensive Contact**
 - a. The forearm-striking surface should be accelerated as a unit with the shoulder and extension of the trunk. DO NOT "wind up" accelerating the forearm separately.
 - b. Block from the front or the side and above the waist.
 - c. When pursuing an opposing ball carrier, do not "pile on" when the opponent is down.
 - d. Never grab an opponent's facemask.
3. **General**
 - a. GET UP! When on the ground you are vulnerable to being stepped on or receiving a leg, shoulder or knee injury.
 - b. When falling - TUCK - Leave no extremity extended either to absorb the fall, or while on the ground.
 - c. Participate fully in all neck strengthening exercises.
4. **Water**

Frequent drink breaks will be scheduled during practices, and players should hydrate themselves frequently before and during practice and games. Athletes must also be responsible to monitor their intake and request water as needed.
5. **Weight Room**

Maintenance strength training procedures will be utilized. Observe all weight room policies for progressions, spotting, and general safety.

In the Locker Room

- Be alert to slippery floors and use caution.
- Be alert to changes in floor texture and to elevated thresholds between shower and locker rooms.
- Keep floors free of litter.
- Secure all personal belongings in assigned locker.
- Open locker doors can have sharp edges. Close and lock locker door when away from your assigned locker.

In the Locker Room (cont.)

- Use soap and shampoo only in the sink/shower areas.
- Horseplay, roughhousing, hazing or initiations is prohibited.
- Identify incidents of foot or other skin infections to the coach and athletic trainer immediately.

Entry to the Practice/Contest Site

- Be alert to ramps, stairs, artificial turf surfaces, carpets, concrete surfaces, stairways, practice/playing surfaces and other changes in footing textures.
- Be alert to weather conditions – especially stormy weather. Check with the coach before practicing or playing if there are any safety questions. Use good judgment regarding unsafe weather if the coach is located at a different area than you are practicing/playing.
- Be alert to the location of warm-up drills.
- Be alert to debris and glass in practice/playing areas.
- Be cautious in parking lots when unloading equipment or changing shoes.
- If you notice or have a safety concern, bring it to the coach’s attention prior to initiating practice/playing.
- Be alert to:
 - a. Goal posts
 - b. Blocking sleds
 - c. Kicking/Kick return drills
 - d. Passer/Receiver drills
 - e. Agility, sprinting, or other fast action drills
 - f. No horseplay, rough-housing, hazing or initiations.

Travel to Contest/Practice Site

- Student-athletes are required to travel in school vehicles.
- Student-athletes who do not travel in school vehicles may only travel with parent/guardian and/or another designated family member if written permission is given by the parent/guardian 2-days in advance of the event date. The parent/guardian and student-athlete assumes all risk of personal liability for damage, loss or injury related to non-school vehicle transportation.
- At no time will a coach approve a request for a student-athlete to transport with another member of the team in non-school vehicles. Parent permission does not supercede this rule.
- Be alert to weather conditions-especially stormy weather if traveling in non-school vehicles.

Emergencies

Because of the nature of football, some injuries will occur. All injuries must be called to a coach and trainer’s attention. Most will be minor and can be managed with basic first aid. However, some may need more intense management and may also require squad members to:

1. Stop all practices, scrimmages, or drills. **DO NOT** move the victim!
2. Call the coach to manage the situation if not already at the site.
3. Sit or kneel in close proximity.
4. Assist by:
 - a. Helping with the injured person
 - b. Directing athletic trainer to injured player
 - c. Calling for additional assistance
 - d. Bringing first aid equipment or supplies to the site
 - e. Keeping onlookers away
 - f. Directing the rescue squad to the accident site
5. Fire or Fire Alarm
 - a. Evacuate or remain outside the building
 - b. Move and remain 150 feet away from the building
 - c. Be prepared to implement the emergency procedures outlined in #4

I understand that the risks of engaging in the sport of football include, but are not limited to death, serious neck and spinal injuries which may result in complete or partial paralysis, brain damage, serious injury to virtually all bones, joints, ligaments, muscles, tendons, and other aspects of the muscular-skeletal system and serious injury or impairment to other aspects of the body, health and well-being and may impair future abilities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We certify that we have read, understand, and agree to adhere to the cautions, considerations, and responsibilities required for participation on the De Soto High School Football Team.

Athlete Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date