

## **“FIRST TIME FOOTBALL PARENTS” GUIDE TO ELK RIVER YOUTH FOOTBALL 2<sup>ND</sup>/3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE LEVEL**

**The mission of Elk River Youth Football is to provide a fun athletic experience while teaching our players specific and general football skills.**

**We want both parents and players to enjoy this introductory level of football.**

**WHAT CAN I EXPECT OR NEED TO KNOW ABOUT:**

### **EQUIPMENT**

- Each player will need to purchase their own helmet and shoulder pads and practice jersey. The league will provide football pants (with pads), mouth guard, game jersey, and helmet stickers.
- Parents can usually pick up a practice jersey for \$5-\$10 at a local or chain sporting good store such as R & D Sales or Play it Again Sports in Elk River, or Dick’s Sporting Goods, or Sports Authority in Maple Grove, Etc. It does not matter what color their practice jersey is.
- Shoulder pads should be fitted by sales staff while purchasing them. It is important that they are not too small or large. New \$40 and up, used can be found for \$25.
- Helmets can also be purchased from all of those same stores. You can expect to spend anywhere from \$25 - \$40 for a used helmet to \$60-\$115 for a new helmet. Again, it is important that this be fitted on your athlete for a proper fit prior to purchase. Make sure to buckle and fit the chin strap in addition to the helmet. The exact chin strap fit can be adjusted throughout the season. Several stores offer a variety of face mask styles, chin straps and helmet brands.
- Players should be equipped with a water bottle for both games and practices
- Football gloves are not required. However, they may help somewhat protect player hands as they are getting used to contact. They come in handy as the weather gets colder late in the season, but a pair of choppers on the sideline can suffice. Most players don’t wear them at this age, but not a bad option.
- Cleats are available from most sporting goods stores. Staff there should be able to direct you to football specific cleats. There is not a big difference performance wise between baseball, soccer and football cleats at this age.
- Mouth Guards. You will be given a mouth guard at equipment pick up day, otherwise purchased for about \$1. Boil some water, dip the mouth guard in for 5 seconds then have your player bite down moderately on it while hot. Put it into cool water after the right fit is achieved. Repeat if required. Don’t cut off the strap. Affix it to the helmet face mask. Make sure the kids wear their mouth guard during play. It prevents tooth damage and also can help prevent concussion. Some dental offices can provide custom mouth guards for a fee.
- After game jerseys are issued by each team coach, players will have the option of having their names put on their jerseys. Typically, most every player has this done and cost is about \$5. This will be handled by your team coach.

## PRESEASON ACTIVITY

- Make sure players put on all of their gear prior to actual practice starting. If equipment is not fitted properly prior to purchase or even if it is, running around in helmets and shoulder pads, etc can be a bit uncomfortable at first. Have them play catch or run around in the yard for 20 minutes per day or more for a week or so to acclimate to having the equipment on. Have the boys run into a heavy bag or blocking shield if possible. Getting used to contact and hitting can be a major obstacle at the start of the season compared to other sports such as baseball or basketball.
- Have your athletes watch football on TV, in person at high school games, talk football with family or find one of many web sites with basic football concepts. There are also several books at the library on football. It will help kids get a jump on terminology, position responsibilities and overall game knowledge. Even some video games such as Madden football can transfer a lot of terminology and basic concepts or strategy to our boys. Coaches will be throwing a lot of new information at the boys and getting some basics down before hand will speed up their development.
- Spend some play time out in the yard working on carrying, throwing and catching a football in pads. We will use a reduced size ball during practices and games. Have them run pass routes and practice cutting with the ball. Try and knock it out of their grasp to teach ball security and prevent fumbles.

## PARENT REQUIREMENTS

- Each family will be required to participate in fund raising activity. Near the start of the season we will be selling “Gold Cards”. They sell for \$20 and we would like each family to sell at least 2 to help fund the league activity. They will be handed out by your team coach and they will later collect proceeds.
- Snack and or drink at games. Generally team managers or coaches will prepare a snack or drink list. Team families will take turns bringing a drink and or snack for after games. Not all coaches request this, but several do.
- Volunteer hours – each family will be asked to help out in league activity in some manner for a three hour block (in addition to supporting our young athletes!) Common opportunities include running the chain gang down markers during a game, working the concession stand, pregame field set up, or working the hamburger stand at ERHS varsity games, etc. One hour of your volunteer requirement can be achieved by simply completing the year end on line survey. We want your feed back on how to improve our league activity. Families can opt out of this volunteer requirement by donating \$50if they would prefer. Each coach will collect a check from player parents at the start of the season. It will remain uncashed until the season end. If the family volunteer hours have been completed, the check will be returned to each family.

- Code of conduct. Parents and players are reminded that this is little league football. Sometimes we all can get very wrapped up in blown calls, disappointing game scores, playing time concerns, etc. Coaches and game officials will do the best they can. Our players will learn and take a lot from our reactions in general, and this is no different on the football field. Please remember that each of the board members, coaches and others involved are volunteering their time because they love football, want to develop our young players, and enjoy seeing them having fun playing the game.

## GAMES

- New starting in 2010 – we will be playing 9 man football at this level. We have transitioned to this style for a number of reasons. With 9 man we can provide a smaller coach to player ration while maintaining the integrity of the game. We feel that playing 9 man will also help speed up and increase individual player skills development.
- Game clock. Games will be played with 4 – 12 minute quarters with modified running time. They normally last 1 ½ - 2 hours.
- Most all games will be played at the Orono softball complex near the county fair grounds. There may be slight alterations due to the additional number of teams this season. There will also be a youth football night at one of the ERHS varsity football games. Teams will play a short scrimmage as part of the Elks half time.
- Scoring – a TD is scored as 6 points. There are no kicking attempts for extra points. A successful extra point will score 2 points if by pass play and 1 point if scored by a running play.
- There are required offensive and defensive formations at this level. There is no blitzing or stunting allowed. We want our boys to concentrate and learn the basics – running, tackling, blocking, etc. without confusing our young players.

## MISC.

- Ball carrier weight restrictions. Players will be weighed in on equipment pick up night. Any player in excess of 80 lbs will not be eligible to carry the ball on designed offensive plays during games. They may do so during practice at coach discretion. Players may remove shirt and shoes for weigh ins. They will not be reweighed as the season progresses.
- Division of teams – At this level teams will be selected by the league president, vice president and 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade director. The teams will be divided as equitably as possible by:
  - 1) players in excess of 80lbs
  - 2) 3<sup>rd</sup> graders returning after playing last season
  - 3) 3<sup>rd</sup> graders new to football
  - 4) Remaining 2<sup>nd</sup> graders by weight
- Number of football nights per week. During the first two weeks of the season, teams may practice, scrimmage or play up to 4 nights. After the first two weeks, there will be a maximum of 3 nights (including games) per week. This can seem

- like a big change from some other sports. Most teams will participate in the maximum number of nights per week.
- Positions. Most kids will play a variety of positions on both offense and defense during the season. It is good for all around football development. Physical attributes and football skill sets develop at different rates for each child. Today's offensive lineman could be next year's QB.
  - Elk River Youth Football merchandise. If you are looking for sweatshirts, caps, T shirts, or jackets or other logo items supporting our youth football program they will be available on our website for ordering or purchase in person at R & D Sales (located in the strip mall along the road near the Elk River Theater and Dolphin Car Wash) R & D will also have new helmets, shoulder pads, gloves, and football pants available for purchase.
  - Any further questions can be directed to your team coach or the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade league director.

Most of all we want our young athletes and football families to have fun and enjoy developing football skills and knowledge. See you on the football field this year!