

Our Purpose:

The focus of the program is to promote and teach tackle football for children in grades 1 through 5 that reside in the Bemidji Area. Each participant will learn to play both offensive and defensive positions during the course of the season. Teams are formed with an equal distribution of talent and size. The primary purpose of the program is not to win football games, but rather to teach the fundamentals of football, sportsmanship, discipline, and the importance of team play to all of the participants. Our goal is to support as many children as possible and encourage them to continue their participation into the middle school and high school programs and/or become active fans of the Bemidji Lumberjacks and Bemidji State Beavers.

Our Priorities:

- 1) **Buy in.** Please be here for the right reasons. We would rather a team have *no coach* than the *wrong coach*. With no coach we can make adjustments but with the wrong coach, we potentially lose a kid forever. It is a fact that a kids youth sports coaches are the most important coaches they will ever have. We appreciate our volunteers but we also have a high expectation on character and coaching Bemidji style football.
- 2) **Winning is irrelevant.** No one cares about your youth record. There are no college recruiters here and the HS coaches could care less about your record, athletic abilities or skills of your 9 year old. During your games you will be expected to communicate with the other teams coaches to make it a positive experience for the kids and their families. We would rather you lose a game because you gave a kid a chance than win with manipulating your lineup or play selection.
- 3) **Everybody plays every position and everybody touches the ball.** We want all kids to experience as many positions as possible in their youth football experience. Pigeonholing a kid at 10 years old does not help them or the program. Not every kid is destined for the line or a QB so it is important that you are adept at player rotations and teaching skills. If you see that a kid is really good at a particular position, move them somewhere else. There are 10 other kids on the team that need to learn that position too. Bear in mind size differences but at this level, weight discrepancies are minimal.
- 4) **Misc. items for our coaches.** You will never yell at or single out a kid for anything. Use mistakes as teaching opportunities. No conditioning, ever. No laps, no up-downs, no running before, during or after practice. No exceptions. If a kid misses practice it will not affect their game playing time. We don't know these kids' individual situations and frankly, it's none of our business. Play them as you would play your own kid. The perception of being a non-athlete at 9 years old says nothing about their abilities when they are in HS.

Keep in contact with your parents. You will be provided emails and cell phone #'s. Good communication in this day and age is easy and takes very little time. Consider special items for your team - Matching socks are inexpensive and the kids love them. Turn in your receipts for the special things you do or buy and the club will reimburse you (within reason of course). Encourage them to play other sports. Football won't make them better wrestlers, skaters or basketball players but other sports will make them better football players.

Coaches should consider themselves as a teacher first and a football coach second. Coaches are responsible for molding young minds, and need to have a clear understanding of what is required to be a successful coach in BYF. Your focus should be on teaching the kids how to play the game right, and what good sportsmanship means. All coaches representing BYF need to be clear on this point, so that there are no misunderstandings.