

Ed & Ruth Lehman
YMCA
LONGMONT ®
Flag Football Coaches Handbook
Fall 2009

“I pledge to play the game the best I can. To be a team player. To respect my opponents, the rules, and officials, and to improve myself in Spirit, Mind, and Body.”

Dear Coach,

Volunteers are the backbone of the sport and recreation industry. Across Longmont and the surrounding area there are hundreds of coaches, officials and volunteers that give of their time each week ensuring that people of all ages have an opportunity to participate in the activities they enjoy.

Thanks again for your time and involvement. It means a great deal to me, the Longmont YMCA, the community and I know it means a great deal to the children.

So Coaches, thank you for...

**helping, training, cheering, teaching,
motivating, inspiring, developing responsibility,
respecting, caring, being there, giving your time.**



Sincerely,

Patrick Soldan
Sports Director
720-652-4736
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If you ever need anything, don't hesitate to call or e-mail.

Before the first practice:

1. Call all of the kids and parents on your roster and introduce yourself as soon as possible. Remind them of the first practice. They may not know what day or time the practice is. Tell the parents you would like to have a short meeting (less than 20 minutes). Try to do it just before the first practice.
2. At the meeting, pass out schedules and any other handouts. This is a good time to find a team parent who can help with phone calls and organizing team functions. A team parent should have a copy of the team roster and parents' home and work numbers. The team parent should help make calls if practice is cancelled to remind participants of when practices are scheduled. The team parent should take leadership in coordinating and delegating responsibilities for team functions such as a team party, thank you cards, and acknowledgments for coaches, etc.
3. Let your parents know your expectations of them and find out what they expect from you. If the expectations are unrealistic, now is the time to address them. Get a list of parents' names and work numbers and emergency contact names and numbers.
4. Indicate how important practice time is. It can be negative for a child and the team when a player arrives at a game without the necessary information and preparation to be a successful member of the team. Let's not set the children up for failure.
5. Arrange for a parent who will be at every practice to help with drills, lavatory duty or gym supervision.
6. If you need an assistant or a backup, now is the time to find them.

Tips for a Successful Practice

1. Never end a drill artificially. Teach your players to play every drill out, regardless of the drill's objective.
2. Create a competitive environment. Players can compete with themselves to raise a new standard for individual drills. That competitive element makes the players comfortable with winning, losing, and scoring points and it fosters a head-in-the-game attitude right up to the end.
3. Try not to talk too much. Coach effectively in a concise manner. Most coaches talk too much. When you coach, don't stop the exercise or drill unless it's absolutely necessary. Coach while the activity continues by talking directly to an individual or a small group. On those rare occasions when you must stop the entire activity and bring something to the attention of the team, do it quickly and succinctly. Then get back into action immediately.

4. Positive feedback elicits a better response than negative feedback. Praise when it's warranted; otherwise say nothing.
5. Give your drills names that your players will remember. The next time you do a specific drill, you won't need to waste time explaining it. Just name it and run it.
6. Make sure the players understand the objective of each drill. Tell them what they are trying to accomplish.
7. Adjust and modify the scoring system of a drill to increase the complexity of drills that your players particularly enjoy. Doing this will keep the drill effective. Move gradually.
8. Give your players simple practice rules to follow consistently at every training session, perhaps nothing more than starting on time with a certain sequence of events, using a particular method of receiving instruction, and taking breaks at predetermined times. Rules of practice should provide structure and create a comfortable environment for your athletes.
9. Normally, practice is not the best environment in which to do physical training. You can accomplish that more effectively outside practice, when physical training can be the first priority.
10. Be sensitive to the moods and flow of a practice. If things aren't going well, it may be better to end practice prematurely than continue to practice poorly. On the other hand, abbreviating practice too often is not the way to develop a high-caliber team

First Practice:

1. LEARN EVERYONE'S NAME....FAST (using name tags if necessary).
2. The number one reason kids drop out of programs is because they do not feel connected to the team. It is your job to create team unity and encourage new friendships from the start. Make sure the kids who know each other are separated and mixed with kids they do not know.
3. They will be excited at the beginning of practice. It is okay to start warming up and do some light running before you talk with them.
4. Be organized. Have your practice planned out in detail. Go over the practice plan with your assistants before the practice.
5. Make sure every child present is on your roster. If not, then they are not on your team. Please call the League Director as soon as possible if there are problems. Friends and neighbors may not participate in practices or games. Only the league Director may add a player to your roster.

6. Do not forget to spend time warming up and stretching. Remember, we are trying to develop good fitness habits now, rather than later.
7. Remember your objectives. Participating in sports helps to increase the self-esteem of the athletes and develop character in youth. When you explain a drill or make a statement to a player, think of it as a self-esteem drill or a character development statement.

Before the Game

1. Before the first game, arrive early.
2. Decide who is playing in each quarter/inning beforehand, be prepared to make adjustments.
3. Determine any necessary volunteers, and fill out proper line up sheets if applicable.
4. The performance of most athletes will increase if competition pressures can be reduced. A brief pre-game talk gives you the opportunity to put the importance of the game in its proper perspective. Remind player of the skills they have been practicing and tell them to concentrate on performing these skills rather than worrying about what their opponents will do. Emphasizing the need to think and play as a team and not to criticize teammates. Above all, stress the importance of behaving properly at all times, not arguing with officials and having fun.

During the Game:

1. Relax and enjoy, remember we are having fun, to be a good coach you do not always have to give advice. It is okay to spend some time smiling and being supportive.
2. Try to be enthusiastic and compliment players on good performances. Remember, everyone on your team deserves encouragement, not only the best players.
3. Substitute players allowing everybody to play at least half of the game regardless of the score.
4. Make sure no player plays the entire game.
5. When players come out of the game, first try to say something positive about their performance, and then give them ideas and suggestions for improvements.
6. Do not focus on what a player is doing wrong, focus on what you would like them to do right.
7. Make sure children not participating in the game are supervised. This is a good task for an assistant coach or team parent. Remind them that they can learn a lot by watching their teammates.

At Half Time:

1. Calmly review what went well and what could have been better in the first half, then discuss the improvements that players should make in the second half.
2. Avoid focusing on players mistakes or blowing their mistakes out of proportion. This is just a friendly game being conducted by your neighborhood YMCA.
3. Be optimistic, encouraging and keep your decisions simple.
4. Avoid sarcastic or negative comments about members of your team, the other team or officials.

After the Game:

1. Always congratulate the other team and thank them for their participation.
2. Talk to your team about the positive things that happened during the game, regardless of the result of the game.
3. Now is not the time to discuss problems with opposing coaches or officials. They do not work for you. Their employer is the League Director to which all problems should be directed.
4. Team circle discussion about the game. The discussion can focus on the following questions:
 - Did everyone have a good time today?
 - What went well for the team today?
 - Did we have a good attitude toward the other team?
 - Did we have a good attitude toward the officials?
 - What can we do better next time?
 - What do we need to work on in practice?
 - In what ways were we caring, honest, respectful and responsible?
5. Help us clear the playing area of people connected with your team so the next game may get underway or the staff can clean up.

Suggestions for players problems:

1. If you are having any type of problems with a player,, it is your job to communicate the problem to the parents(s) immediately. Most of your problems are solved just by making the parents aware. Adopt a philosophy of stopping small problems before they become large problems.
2. If you discipline a player in practice (i.e. having them sit by the side for 5 minutes) always indicate what behavior was unacceptable and what behavior is more appropriate.
3. If behavior problems become frequent, ask a parent if they would please attend the whole practice/game, so that they can deal with the problem and you can then focus on the other players.

4. If your efforts with the parent seem to be ineffective, notify you League Director for further support.

Cancellations/Weather:

1. In case of inclement weather or wet field conditions, please call the YMCA cancellation Line at 720-652-4736 for the most current conditions.
2. The first rainout will be made up regardless of when it occurs. Coaches will be notified of subsequent rainout makeup dates.
3. Weather can be full of unpredictability i.e., wind rain, lightening. If during a game there is severe weather please continue with CAUTION. We are more concerned with safety of all participants than completing a game. Discuss concerns with other coaches/referees or site supervisor. It is not our policy to cancel games because of excess heat or a little rain or cold weather. Please call the game cancellation line if you are unsure.
4. Lightning – No games will be played when there are visible lightening strikes within three miles of the field.
5. Rain or Snow – Games can be delayed or cancelled as a result of rain. Games will be delayed or canceled until they can be safely resumed.
6. High Winds – Safety, comfort and ability to play will govern these situations.
7. Parents are encouraged to make individual decisions for their own child when outdoor weather elements become a concern, as to whether or not to attend any particular game if the game is not officially cancelled.

Extra Reminders:

1. Remember, if the school you use for practices/games is closed due to the weather, your practice/game is cancelled.
2. If you must cancel practice call your team members or parents and please inform the front desk at the YMCA as soon as possible so we can answer any questions.
3. Administrative questions or comments are handled by the League Director. As you might expect, game days are quite hectic. Try to contact the League Director on a non-game day if it is possible.

DEALING WITH THE PARENTS

Coaching a youth league team is exciting and rewarding. But from time to time you may experience difficulty with parents. Some may want their children to play more, or they might question some of your judgments as a coach. This is normal, so don't feel that you are alone if this happens. Here are a few thoughts to remember when dealing with parents.

1. Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children who are involved. Encourage parents to communicate with you. It is always best to get concerns out in the open.
2. Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease.
3. No coach can please everyone. Do not try. Give the parents a response to their concerns but do not feel like you need to give a lengthy justification for every decision you make.
4. Know what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the players and the team.
5. Resist unfair pressure. You are the coach, and it is your responsibility to make the final decision.
6. Most important, be fair. If you treat all players equally, you will gain their respect.
7. Handle any confrontations one-to-one, and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Do not argue with a parent. Listen to their viewpoint and thank them for it, then give them your response. Remember you do not work for them; you work for the League Director. If they have an issue that you cannot resolve, refer them to the League Director.
8. Ask parents not to criticize their (or other) children during a practice or game. Do not let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
9. Do not blame the players for their parent's actions, if negative. Try to maintain a fair attitude.

Always remember that you are dealing with all types of children and parents with different backgrounds and ideas. One of your main challenges as a coach is to deal with these differences in a positive manner so that the team's season will be an exciting and enjoyable experience for all.

WORKING WITH OFFICIALS

Youth Sports officials are usually parents, other coaches, and high school or college students. Some of these people are volunteers who learn how to officiate through practical experience. Coaches should try to be sympathetic rather than critical of the official's role. If you see that mistakes are being made, try not to embarrass the official by pointing out errors in front of everyone. A better approach is to wait until half time or until the game is over thank the person for officiating the game, then express your observations. Most officials want to improve and appreciate constructive criticism given in a positive and respectful manner. Should an official not want to speak with you, please respect their wishes and direct your comments to the League Director.

PARENTS ORIENTATION OUTLINE

Welcome 3-5 minutes

1. Welcome- introduce yourself and tell them a little bit about yourself, then ask them to introduce themselves.
2. Thank to everyone for coming – emphasize that parental support will be a key the child's success.

Philosophy 5-8 minutes

1. Share the everybody plays, everybody wins philosophy. Address the importance of participation and the things the parents can do to help de-emphasize winning.
2. Explain the key concepts of character development, fun and fitness. Talk to them about your coaching style.
3. Emphasize family involvement.
4. Emphasize respect for participants, coaches, and officials and things the parents can do to support this.

Expectations 5-8 minutes

1. Tell them what team members should wear and what equipment they should bring
2. Review practice time and locations. Emphasize that practice time is limited, scheduling is tight and the importance of being on time.
3. Provide information about goal setting with parents and children (relate it to self improvement and family involvement)
4. Discuss the opportunities for volunteer help (assistant coach, values coach, scorekeeper, timekeeper, team parent)
5. Get names and phone contacts for emergencies
6. Re-emphasize that parents must drop-off and pick-up participants on time.

Questions and Answers 3-5 minutes

YMCA Flag Football Drills and warmups

GRASS Drills I:

- .. High Knees - Russian Walks (walk forward, but kick your legs out like a punt)
- .. Bounding (Competition) - Backwards (Like a cornerback on a receiver)
- .. Butt-Kickers - Lunges Parallel
- .. Broad Jump (Competition) - A-frames, walk out hands first, then second walk in on toes
- .. Spider Man - Karioke (leading leg in front and then behind)

DRILL (Circle Toss/Hot Potato): Players form a circle, upon whistle toss ball clockwise and at the next whistle reverse direction of tosses. Players are out if they don't catch ball.

Add two or three balls to eliminate more players quickly. Use two balls for last two players: one throws high and the other low.

TEACH (Carrying a Football and Proper Hand-off): Middle finger on tip of ball, forearm, bicep, and rub ball on chest as you run. To receive a hand-off on your left then the left arm should be up high with the palm facing down and the right arm should be low with the palm facing up.

TEACH Agility Ladders: Never touch any part of the ladder. Always go thru the ladders on your toes. Go slowly at first and then speed up at the end. Do it right with no misses and not just fast. (As a joke, charge water gun and playfully go after kids who mess up or fumble.)

TEACH (Calling a Play in the Huddle): Here are the steps to calling a play: 1) You will always call the formation first, including the alignment (left or right, if necessary). 2) Call the specific play. 3) Call the specific count that the ball will be hiked. For Example, a hiking cadence is as follows: color, color, Set, Go, Go. Then the QB will tell the players in the huddle that the ball will be hiked on set or on one (which is the first Go) or on two (which is the second Go).

TEACH Offensive Formations: Five players on a team: Q= Quarterback; C=Center; L=Left Receiver; R=Right Receiver; and RB=Running Back.

- Split T: One receiver on left and the other on right. QB is behind center and RB is behind QB.
- TRIPS Left/Right: three receivers go to the call side of the formation. This is a no back formation.
- TWINS Left/Right NO Back: Two receivers on call side and one receiver on other side, no back.
- TWINS Left/Right, Single Back: Two receivers on call side and no receiver on other side with a back.

TEACH QB Exchange and Shotgun: The ball must be hiked between the legs. **“Down, set, hike.” Or “Color, color, Set, Go, Go”** Bring ball up sideways. QB’s hands must touch the center. QB’s hands must be in an alligator position. Look left and right before snap to check out what defense your opponent is using. Move leg to start man in motion. Only one man in motion.

Teach Shotgun Hike: If ball hits ground it is a loss of down.....NO LATERALS...All direct hand offs.

Teach how to properly wear and Run with Flags: Teach running in a zig-zag motion. Teach stop and go move. Teach spinning right and left ...player should spin with back to defensive player.

“ **Teach Shark and Minnows Game:** Put one ball in middle for a free run to other side. You can play that players need to get both flags or just one to become a shark.

“ **Teach Knockout Football:** Have kids stand in a line about 20 ft from counselor. Kids throw the ball at coach’s chest. If it is a good throw the coach will catch the football and the player will run up for the handoff. If the throw is bad the coach will not catch the ball and the player will have to retrieve it on its own and then touch the football against the coach before the next player’s throw is caught by the coach. The coach will then throw the ball to the next player in line or back to the player who just threw it to them.

Teach Shark and Minnows with Scoring and Defense: Same thing as Sharks and Minnows, but this time everybody plays as a team. Divide players into two teams with names. All players will have a football. When the coach yells out a team name, then that team will be on offense and the other team will drop their footballs and try to pull a flag of their opponent before they get into the end-zone and score. The coach will vary who is called but will make sure that both teams get the same offensive chances.

TEACH (Running with the ball and switching the ball with cuts): Practice having kids run a zig-zag thru cones and switching hands.

Team Relay: (Zig-zag running cuts with hand offs at the end)

Team Relay: (Ball is weaved thru legs as you run)

Team Strength Relay: Wheelbarrow racing as a team relay

Team Building: Your team has to figure out a way to not have their feet on the ground for ten seconds or they are eliminated. Solution: Push-up position with their feet on each others back.

TEACH (Jingle Jangle Drill): Run 5 yards straight, then five yards sideways, then five yards backwards, and then forward to the start. Mark the area with cones or kids will cheat corners. Make sure hand-off is done properly so they don’t bump into the next runner.

CONTEST (Cone Jumping): Players jump for 30 seconds and see who can get the most jumps without missing. Don’t count those jumps that knock over a cone. Have winners go for twenty seconds.

TEACH 3-Step QB Drop: After receiving snap a right-hander drops back with right foot, then crosses over with left and then stabilizes with right footthen throws.

TEACH Passing Routes:

- *Quick Out:* This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the receiver cuts out towards the sideline then looks for the ball.

- **Deep Out:** This is a 10-15 yard route. It should be run exactly like the quick out only deeper.
- **Drag or In:** This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the receiver breaks into the middle of the field on a 90 degree angle and looks for the ball.
- **Flag:** This is a 10-15 yard route forward then the receiver breaks at a 45 degree angle towards the sideline and looks for the ball.
- **Curl or Button-hook:** This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the receiver stops and turns to the ball.
- **Fake Button-Hook:** Fake a button-hook and QB pumps ball and then go long
- **Post Corner:** This is a 12-20 yard route forward then the receiver cuts on a 45 degree angle to the middle of the field for a few steps then the receiver cuts on a 45 degree angle towards the sideline and then looks for the ball.
- **Post:** This is a 12-20 yard route forward then the receiver breaks on a 45 degree angle towards the middle of the field and looks for the ball.
- **Fly:** This route is run straight up the field with the receiver looking for the ball after he gets past about 15 yards.
- **Slant:** This is a 3-5 yard route forward then the receiver breaks towards the middle of the field on a 45 degree angle and looks for the ball.

TEACH Defense on a Passer: Never let the receiver get behind you. Stay five yards back and backpedal in a crouch, then close quickly and knock ball down or get ready to pull flag.

TEACH Zone Defense versus Man-to Man and how to Stop the run: Defenders not rushing should slide with the ball to prevent a run.

Defensive Drill (Shoot the Gap): Place six cones in a straight line with about a 5 yard gap. One line will have a ball and the other line will be the defenders. At the whistle the offensive player runs forward and will decide what gap he will "shoot"the defender must pull the flag before the off player reaches a line about 10 yards forward of the line of cones.

DRILL (Passer, Defender, and Receiver): Groups of three players. Have the receiver tell the QB what type of pass route he will run. Do three passes and switch. See who can get the most catches and completed throws.

DRILL QB, Pass and Receive Relay Race: Set out a 20 x 20-yard area and divide the team into even groups. Set cones 5 yards from each end line and 10 yards apart. Each team requires one football so the entire class can participate.

Drill Outline: This is a relay race. The object is for QB 1 to pass to WR 1, who has run to cone (A) to catch the ball. The second participant in line is WR 2. WR 2 runs to cone (B) and repeats the drill. The drill is repeated until every participant has a turn. If the ball is dropped, the WR picks it up and continues with the drill.

Key Coaching Points: WR must stop and completely turn around giving the QB a big target. WR must give a solid handoff to the QB when returning to line. After each relay race, a WR becomes the new QB.

DRILL Flag Survivor (Team and Individual): Set up a cone area that can be easily shrunk as players are eliminated. Play individually as well as a team. When playing as teams have one team be the chaser and see how long it takes them to get all the flags of one team. Then reverse the process and see if the other team can shorten the time it takes to get the flags of the other team. Basically, you try to get someone's flag before they get your flag. Players get extremely tired during this drill, so be ready for water breaks. Also set up a time limit and shrink the area of play or players will not be able to get each other out.

PASSING Drill, Around the World: Group all of the players in a huge circle and give them each a number. Have one player be the QB in the center of the circle. When the coach calls out a number, then the player will raise their hand and the QB will quickly locate them and throw them a pass. After several passes rotate the QB and have the players in the circle juggle their position.

Drill One on One: Have both teams sit on different sidelines and number the players. Place one ball in the center of the end zone. Yell out one number or several numbers and who is on offense. When a player hears their number they run into the field and play either offense or defense.

CONTEST (Sharp Shooter): Place Several tall cones randomly on the ground. Have all the shooter stay in a circle of cones. Pick one or two players to be ball retrievers. Have a 3 min timer and see which team can knock over the most cones.

CONTEST (Superman): Time this whole event and the shortest time wins. First the player runs a jingle, jangle. Then the player runs thru an agility ladder without making a mistake. Then the player zig-zags thru a set of cones and switches the ball after every cut. Next they recover a fumble and then stand up and knock a cone off of a target or throw a football thru a hula-hoop that is spinning.



YMCA

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.