Health and Safety

Concussion Awareness "When in doubt, sit them out!"
ACCJFL recognizes that sport-related concussion and education are concerns for youth football players, parents and leagues. The ACCJFL will have the following actions plan for suspected concussion
• Immediately remove the player suspected of concussion from the game or practice Remember: When in doubt, sit them out!
• Inform the athlete's parents or guardians of what happened to the player
• Have the player evaluated by a licensed health care professional who has experience in the diagnosis and management of concussion
• Keep the player out of practice or play until a licensed health care professional experienced in the diagnosis and management of concussion declares in writing that the player is ready to return to play

It can take time for concussion symptoms to fully develop. It is important to observe an athlete after a suspected concussion. The most common symptoms are headache, confusion, nausea or dizziness, mood changes and a sense of lethargy or fatigue. If symptoms worsen – for example, an increasing headache or increasing nausea and vomiting – seek emergency care.

What you can do next
Watch USA Football's concussion awareness videos: http://www.usafootball.com/health-safety/videos-and-downloads#
•Watch USA Football's Put Pride Aside for Player Safety campaign videos: http://usafootball.com/health-safety/concussion-awareness
• Read articles in usafootball.com's Concussion Awareness archive: http://usafootball.com/health-safety/concussion-articles
• Print USA Football's Heads Up concussion clipboard information: http://www.usafootball.com/sites/default/files/ClipboardStickerFootball%20 FINAL.pdf
See Appendix 3 on page 88-89 for example of Heads Up Concussion In Football
• Order a free concussion awareness poster from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by calling (800) CDC-INFO.
• Review the CDC's concussion awareness information: http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion
• Encourage your coaches to register for USA Football's Certified Coaching Education Program (CEP) and pass the chapter quiz for concussion awareness

Heat Emergency Preparedness Acclimation / Practice Level of Contact
Let's start with a term all coaches should be familiar with as their seasons begin: Acclimation. Acclimation means "to become accustomed to a new climate or environment." This will be vital to remember, especially during summer practices as players' bodies adapt to heat and seek ways to efficiently cool down. Days 1 and 2 are the most dangerous, as most players will not report to camp or practice physiologically prepared for the environmental stresses, preseason conditioning and football uniforms that will tax their bodies.

Though you can't control how and where players exercise in their off time, you can control their environment during practice.

This begins with communication. Discuss the goals for the day's practice indoors or in the shade, away from the summer heat.
During that discussion, let them know that it's OK to let you know if they're feeling bad or if they suspect a teammate is feeling bad.
Let them know that it's OK to "put pride aside." They can sit out a drill or two or cool off without repercussions. A player's safety always comes first.
Schedule frequent breaks (every 20 minutes), preferably in the shade with water or sports drink and don't finish practices with intense exercises, such as sprints.

Please remember:

- Water should be made available as needed throughout practice.
- Communicate and Acclimate •
- Discuss goals indoors or in a shaded area
- Communication: Put Pride Aside
- Hold a 90 minute to two hour practice
- Schedule hydration breaks in the shade
- Don't finish practice with intense exercises Heat Illness On hot days, a football uniform and equipment can increase the risk of heat related illness by doubling or tripling the player's heat insulation factor. If heat cannot escape through a player's uniform and equipment, it will increase that player's body temperature.

To avoid this insulation factor, coaches should gradually introduce the uniform during the acclimation period.

The American College of Sports Medicine proposes a preseason practice schedule that incorporates both heat and uniform acclimation

.Preseason Practice, Days 1-2:
• Helmet, T-shirt and shorts only
• No live contact
• Not to exceed two hours (I team no longer then 1 hour)
• Communication: Put Pride Aside

Days 3 through 4 but feel free to incorporate shoulder pads, as this will allow your players to gradually acclimate to the uniform and the heat
For now, keep live contact drills out of your practice plan and stay under the two hour duration limit.

Preseason Practice, Days 3-4
• Helmet and shoulder pads only
• No live contact
• Not to exceed two hours
• Communication: Put Pride Aside

On the following week DAY 5 introduce full uniforms
Let your players hit the sleds and the pads, but stay away from live contact.
Again, keep your practice duration under two hours.

- Full pads
- No live contact
- Not to exceed two hours

Days 6 through 7, your players should be ready for your customized practice schedule. Coaches are encouraged to introduce contact through a progressive manner to ensure they are using proper technique before full-contact (Thud & Live Action) drills are allowed.

Full-contact drills should be limited during the preseason and regular season as the number of exposures may increase the chance for injury to youth players. Coaches are to limit the amount of full-contact to no more than 30 minutes per day and no more than 120 minutes per week.

Rationale: At this point in the season, games have begun and full-contact exposure rates have increased on a weekly basis for players. To account for this, the recommendation to eliminate one practice per week with pads (uppers only) or when back to school occurs and decrease the amount of time dedicated to full-contact drills decreases the number of exposures per week.

Full-contact consists of both "Thud" and "Live Action" By definition, "Thud" involves initiation of contact at full speed with no predetermined winner, but no take-down to the ground. Initial contact, particularly with linemen, is just as physical with "Thud" as with "Live Action." The ACCJFL recognizes that "Live Action" likely carries a higher injury risk to the body than does "Thud." The first three levels of Contact "Air," "Bags," and "Control" are considered no or controlled-contact, and thus no limitations are placed on their use in practice.

The ACCJFL defines contact using its Levels of Contact t (see below) to help coaches assign a level of resistance for each drill period within their practice plan. Properly employing the levels of contact during a football practice is an important skill for youth coaches to learn. This is completed by adjusting the distance between players, the speed at which they conduct a drill and modifying the "winner" of a drill. In doing this, coaches can better accomplish specific teaching objectives during practices and decrease the chance for injury. Planning when to teach, when to compete and when to adjust contact promotes a better experience for players and coaches.

Proper usage of the Levels of Contact system will help players perform their contact skills at a high level while instilling confidence. Employing the Levels of Contact system also helps reduce player fatigue, which can advance player safety.

Explaining Levels of Contact Levels of Contact focuses on varying intensity levels throughout practices to build player confidence, ensure their safety and prevent both physical and mental exhaustion.

Five intensity levels are used to introduce players to practice drills which position them to master the fundamentals and increase skill development.

CONTACT INTENSITY DESCRIPTION
Air- 0 -Players run a drill unopposed without contact.
Bags- 1 -Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.
Control 2- Drill is run at assigned speed until the moment of contact; one player is pre-determined the 'winner' by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet.
Thud -3 -Drill is run at assigned speed to competitive speed through the moment of contact; no pre-determined "winner." Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill.
Live Action- 4- Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground.

Dehydration

Dehydration is defined as a loss of body water. A football player with below normal levels of body water is more susceptible to a rise in body temperature, muscle cramps and premature fatigue.

Don't Wait to Hydrate • PLAYERS WHO DRINK FLUIDS SOLELY TO QUENCH THIRST WILL OFTEN PRACTICE IN A STATE OF DEHYDRATION

Create an environment in which coaches and teammates are vigilant in recognizing the signs of dehydration, and incorporate regular fluid breaks into your practice schedule.

Players should replace fluids and electrolytes every 15 to 20 minutes. Water is acceptable, but sports drinks are preferred for several reasons: The electrolytes and flavor in sports drinks stimulate thirst and encourage drinking; they contain sodium, which promotes fluid retention and can decrease the risk of severe muscle cramps; and they have carbohydrates that provide energy to active muscle and improve the player's ability to work longer and harder
Sports Drinks: • Electrolytes and flavor stimulate thirst
• Sodium promotes fluid balance and can decrease severe muscle cramps
• Carbohydrates provide energy to active muscle

Without daily checks on weight and fluid loss, the dehydration factor will increase over time and become dangerous for the player. A good rule of thumb is a player should consume 24 ounces of water or sports drink for every pound of weight lost within 6 hours after practice. A youth football player/ parent can check if he/she is dehydrated by monitoring their urine. If the player's urine is dark in color (like apple juice), he is most likely dehydrated. If his urine is light in color (like lemonade), he is adequately hydrated. If his urine is clear he may be over-hydrated. Parents and guardians should inquire about their young players' urine color, as it's a great indicator of hydration level - definitely a question worth asking.

Heat stroke is a form of hyperthermia, an elevated body temperature. If precautions and emergency preparations aren't made, players who exert themselves under the sun in extreme heat and humidity run the risk of abnormally high elevated body temperatures. Improper maintenance

of body hydration exacerbates the risks. Unlike the less severe forms of hyperthermia, heat cramps and heat exhaustion, heat stroke is a medical emergency that can be fatal if not properly treated. Coaches should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of heat stroke, which can develop rapidly and without warning.

They can include: Nausea, vomiting, fatigue, weakness, headache, muscle cramps, muscle aches and dizziness. Heat Exhaustion Signs and Symptoms • Nausea • Vomiting • Fatigue • Weakness • Headache • Muscle cramps • Muscle aches • Dizziness Heat Stroke Signs and Symptoms • Elevated body temperature • Absence of sweating with flushed skin (*Easiest way to differentiate from heat exhaustion) • Rapid pulse • Breathing difficulty • Strange behavior • Hallucinations • Confusion • Agitation • Disorientation • Seizure • Coma Heat Emergency Preparedness Heat stroke can result in permanent organ damage and even death, so make sure you can recognize the signs and symptoms; make sure your staff, players and their parents understand the risks; and have a plan of action in case of emergency.

If a player goes down with what you suspect to be heat stroke, begin cooling the athlete immediately somewhere on the practice field, preferably in the shade. Strip the player of his/her equipment and,move the player to a shaded area and begin the cooling process by covering him/her in ice bags from shoulders to hips. Again, be sure to monitor the athlete for responsiveness, pulse and breathing. Remember, in this situation seconds count. If done properly, immediate cooling can reduce the risk of permanent disability.

Heat Emergency and Response While the player is being cooled down with cold water immersion or ice bags, a predetermined member of the staff we'll call a CRISIS COORDINATOR should call 911 to coordinate with EMS technicians. This staff member should carry a cell phone at all times, and he or she should have parent contact information for all the players. When calling 911, the crisis coordinator should provide all pertinent emergency information, including: the location's name and address, directions, an initial assessment of the player's symptoms and details about the treatment being given. The crisis coordinator should know the location of the practice field's EMS entry point, make sure it is accessible and should meet paramedics at the front of the school or facility to direct them swiftly to the scene. Finally, the crisis coordinator should accompany the injured player to the hospital. As a coach, it is important to recognize the signs of dehydration and heat stroke, but it is even more important to take preventative measures in planning and scheduling practices. Be aware of acclimation time, communicate with your team and their parents, be sure your team hydrates properly, and designate a crisis coordinator for your team. With these keys in mind, you and your team will have a safe and healthy season.