



POP WARNER BECOMES FIRST NATIONAL FOOTBALL ORGANIZATION TO ELIMINATE THREE-POINT STANCE

Nation's oldest youth football program is also eliminating kickoffs in a fourth division and introducing age-specific programs

LANGHORNE, PA (February 28, 2019) – Pop Warner Little Scholars, Inc., the nation's longest serving youth football organization, today announced that it will become the first national football program at any level to eliminate the three-point stance as it advances efforts to make the sport safer for young people.

The ban, which will be introduced in Pop Warner's three youngest divisions this season, is aimed at changing how offensive and defensive linemen engage in contact when the ball is snapped. Under the new rule, players in Tiny Mite (5-7 years old), Mitey Mite (7-9) and Junior Pee Wee (8-10) will not be allowed to position themselves on the line with their hand on the ground before the snap. Instead, they must either be upright or in a modified squat position with their hands on their legs.

"We believe this change is another major step in creating a safer, better football experience for young people," said Jon Butler, executive director of Pop Warner Little Scholars. "By moving away from the three-point stance at our youngest levels we are changing how players are introduced to the sport and how they learn to play the game. We are also setting the stage for our higher levels of play to adopt the change. Because our sport has been willing to evolve over the past 150 years it is safer than ever, while maintaining what makes it so great."

"When making decisions like this we first look at them from a medical standpoint and examine whether the change will make the playing experience safer for our young athletes. We believe this rule does that," said Julian Bailes, MD, chairman of the Pop Warner Medical Advisory Committee and NorthShore University Health System's surgical director at NorthShore Neurological Institute and chair of the Department of Neurosurgery. "Eliminating the three-point stance should lessen the amount of force between linemen and we expect it will cut down on unintentional helmet contact at the line."

Pop Warner will use this coming season to assess the new rule in the younger divisions as it considers implementing it later for the program's higher levels.

Pop Warner also announced two additional changes for the 2019 season, which starts in September:

- **No kickoffs at the Pee Wee (9-11 years old) level.** Pop Warner's 2016 rule banning kickoffs in its three youngest age groups will be introduced at its Pee Wee division this season. Instead of kicking the ball off following a score or to start a half it will be placed at the 35-yard line.

- **Adding alternative to Age-Weight.** Pop Warner leagues may continue the current structure of divisions based on a player's age and weight or it can now implement a division by age only. Currently, an estimated 75-80% of youth football leagues nationally abide by an age-only structure.

Over the past 10 years Pop Warner has instituted other major safety-focused changes, including:

- **To teach kids how to better recognize if they or a teammate have suffered a concussion, Pop Warner is providing access to [CrashCourse](#),** an interactive concussion education program developed by TeachAids, a nonprofit education initiative, and researchers at Stanford University.
- **Pop Warner offers Rookie Tackle,** a program to help kids transition from Flag Football to 11-player tackle. It is played on a smaller field with fewer players and meant to introduce the sport.
- In 2016, Pop Warner announced **contact is restricted to 25 percent** of practice time.
- **Pop Warner coaches are mandated to train in USA Football's Heads Up Football** program, where safer approaches to tackling and blocking are taught.
- In 2012, **Pop Warner banned full-speed head-on, blocking or tackling drills** where players lined up more than 3 yards apart.
- In 2010, **Pop Warner implemented the first youth sport concussion policy. Under the policy, any participant removed from play** due to a head injury may not return to Pop Warner activities until he or she is evaluated – and receives written clearance – by a licensed medical professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions.
- To ensure that Pop Warner stays on the forefront of health and safety issues and any medical developments that may affect our young athletes, **Pop Warner formed an independent Medical Advisory Committee in 2010.** Led by neurosurgeons, researchers, pediatricians and sports medicine professionals, the committee is focused on the prevention, proper identification and treatment of concussions; hydration awareness and proper nutrition guidelines; and general health and safety issues.

About Pop Warner Little Scholars, Inc.

Founded in 1929 and headquartered in Langhorne, PA, Pop Warner Little Scholars is the nation's oldest youth football, cheerleading and dance organization and the only youth sports organization that emphasizes academics as a prerequisite for participation. Pop Warner participants enjoy the opportunity to learn and compete in their sports in an atmosphere that emphasizes fun, academics and character. For more information on Pop Warner and its programs, visit popwarner.com or follow Pop Warner on Twitter [@Pop_Warner](https://twitter.com/Pop_Warner), Facebook [@PopWarnerLittleScholars](https://www.facebook.com/PopWarnerLittleScholars), Instagram [@popwarnerlittlescholars](https://www.instagram.com/popwarnerlittlescholars) and Snapchat [@popwarner1929](https://www.snapchat.com/add/popwarner1929).

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