



Bellevue Steelers Youth Football 101 - A Beginners Guide

This class will give you information and help you to a basic understanding of the positions in youth football.

Football is a game of team work, discipline, determination and dedication. It is very difficult for a young athlete to do well in football without putting in the necessary conditioning, practice and studying of the plays. The more a coach can motivate his players to perform at their best the greater chance of success the team will have. I'll take a team of energetic hard working kids over a lazy athletic team any day of the week and usually come out on top.

Football, more than any other game requires all team members to be focused and to understand their responsibilities on every play. If a lineman misses a block, the play can be broken up before it gets started. If the snap between the center and quarterback is not completed smoothly the play is over. If a player misses an open field tackle, the result could be a touchdown.

The beauty of the game is that with hard work, discipline and determination a team can have a very rewarding season. I'm not talking about wins and losses. I'm referring to a season where upon completion the players feel a sense of pride and accomplishment regardless of the team record.

As a parent and a coach it is very important to remember that this is a tough game and some kids will not enjoy it. I remember my first year playing at 12 years old and riding home from one of the first practices with pads, telling my mom that I wanted to quit because it was too difficult. My mom was always very encouraging and suggested I give it a few more days and if I still felt the same way that I could quit. I continued playing for 10 more years and I am confident that the experiences I learned in football developed my determination, drive and work ethic.

As a parent of young player, it is critical that they enjoy the game. Your role is one of being the ultimate cheerleader. You must encourage and support your young ballplayer regardless of their performance and outcome. If you have played the game, you know the difficulties it can present. If you've never played the game, watch a complete practice and understand that carrying around 10 pounds of gear while you run, catch, tackle and block is not easy, especially for a young player.

If you want to help your son become better at the game, throw the ball around with them in the yard, even if you've never played. Let your young player show you what they have learned. Have them teach *you* what they are being taught by their coach.

It is also very important that you let the coach do his job and try not to influence where your son plays. If you believe your child has an aptitude for a different position, have your child ask his coach if he could get a chance to play that position in practice. Our coaches will give kids a chance to play just about any position, unless your child exceeds a weight restriction for a particular position. If you feel your sons coach is not cooperative to your son read our guidelines on how to communicate effectively with your coach.

It's important to understand that the more positions your child plays as a youngster the better they will become as they mature. They will have a better understanding of the game. If your child is a lineman at 10 years old, doesn't mean he will play that position as they mature and grow. Some kids love playing the line, while others want to be the quarterback, running back or wide receiver. Others will desire to play linebacker, defensive line or defensive back.

Offensive Positions:

Quarterback - Must be able to think quickly, have quick feet, a decent arm throwing the ball and a good understanding of the game. This is usually the leader of the offense.

Running Backs - Typically are some of the faster kids on the team, but also has to be tough. At the youth level the running back will take a lot of hits as the linemen learn to block. Some teams have two running backs, where others will have one running back and one fullback. The fullback is usually not as fast as the running back and typically plays a role of lead blocker and short yardage back.

Receivers - Good speed and the ability to catch the ball is typically required, and they must be able to block in the open field. They are also called Split End, Flanker, Wide Receiver or X/Y.

Linemen - Normally the bigger kids will play the line. The Offensive line is a critical component for a team to succeed. If your child does not like the line encourage him to work hard because without a good line the chances for team success are very slim. Make no mistake, the offensive line is not glamorous, but it is very important. The center is probably the most important position on the field. If he can't snap the ball to the quarterback effectively you have no offense.

Tight Ends - This is a position for a very athletic kid who can block and catch the ball. Typically tight ends will block much more than catch the ball. However, having a tight end that can catch can be a dangerous weapon for an offense.



Defensive Positions:

Linebackers - Linebackers are typically the kids who enjoy tackling and contact. They must be a good athlete who can run, read if the offensive play is going to be a run or pass and be able to react quickly. Linebackers must be good at tackling to be effective. They are typically the leaders of the defense unit. They are normally designated with the following names depending how they line up; Sam (strong side), Will (weak side) or Mike (middle).

Defensive Line - Just as critical for a teams success as the Offensive line. If an opponent cannot run or pass the ball because of stellar D-Line play, you have essentially shut their offense down. Nose guards, defensive tackles and defensive ends are all part of the D-Line.

Defensive Backs - They are Cornerbacks and Safeties.

The **Cornerback** is responsible for the sides of the defensive backfield. They usually help with run support on sweeps, or offensive plays which are ran towards the sidelines of the field. A Cornerback should have decent speed and be able to cover receivers when they are going out for a pass.

The **Safety** is either Strong or Free. The Strong Safety typically plays a little closer to the line of scrimmage for run support and most likely is one of the best athletes on the defensive unit. It is good to have a player with above average speed and who likes to tackle AND can defend the pass playing Strong Safety.

The **Free Safety** usually plays what I call "center field" for the defense. He is typically the furthest from the line of scrimmage and the last line of defense if the offense alludes the other defenders. The Free Safety does not need to be a good hitter, but he should be one of the fastest players on the team. The free safety is typically asked to keep the receivers from the other team in front of him to prevent a deep pass and possible touchdown against the defense.

Special Teams

Special teams are when you are not running your standard offense and defense. They are made up of the kickoff, kickoff return, punt and punt return. You may also have a field goal and field goal blocking squad. All four of these squads within a team can make or break a team. With poor coverage on the kickoff the opponent can take the ball in for touchdown and make for a very long day. Good coaches will make time during practice for special teams. Special teams is also an opportunity for kids who don't play a lot on offense or defense to get playing time. If your child is predominantly a special teams player have them own the experience and do their very best. Good plays on special teams will often lead to a chance to play more on offense and defense.

Kickoff - This is the team that starts the game or after scoring a touchdown by kicking to the opponent. Having a good kicker and coverage by the kicking team is very important. Each player is assigned a lane of coverage to prevent the return team from getting the ball into good field position or all the way to a touchdown. Usually better tacklers are on the kickoff team and kids who are fast runners.

Kickoff Return - If your coach wants to start the game on offense or the opposing coach wants to start on defense you will receive the ball to start the game with your return team. If the other team scores a touchdown or kicks a field goal you will have the ball kicked to you. Normally the good ball handlers will be deep on the field to return the kick and good blockers will be up front. The middle is the best mix of blockers and guys who can handle the ball. It is important to make sure you protect the ball and block effectively when on the kickoff return. Running a kickoff back for a touchdown is one of the most exciting plays in football. Players cannot block below the waist on kickoff return.

Punt - On fourth down and long yardage many coaches will punt. This isn't always the case at the youth level, but it will be when they get older. A good punt squad will be able to both block and tackle. They will have to block when the ball is snapped to the punter then tackle after the receiving team has the ball. Having a good punter can also make the game difficult on the

opposition by punting the ball deep into your opponent's side of the field. Covering punts is a difficult task at the youth level because at a young age it is hard to consistently kick the ball deep which makes it more difficult to make the tackle and the potential to give up a big return or touchdown.

Punt return - This is usually your defense on fourth down. Often coaches will sub in other players for playing time who may be better blockers than tacklers because before the ball is punted you are on defense, but after it is punted you are now on offense and trying to move the ball up the field. Normally there will be one kid who is likely the team running back or receiver who will field the punts. It is critical that this player be able to handle the ball very well and have speed. It is the other player's responsibility to block for the guy with the ball. Players cannot block below the waist on a punt return.

Our coaches will spend ample time on all three elements of football and provide an experience that will teach your child much about teamwork, discipline and hard work.

