

## NEP Youth Football *Player Participation Policy*

**Playing time in Youth Football is a tender and emotional topic for parents, coaches and players.**

Determining individual playing time in a football game is not an easy task for coaches and even more difficult for parents to understand. The purpose of this policy has three objectives: 1) to provide a guideline for coaches and 2) to provide an understanding of the play time guidelines for parents so they can **realistically set their expectations and govern themselves accordingly** and 3) to provide parents with a clear path to follow for the resolution of grievance, real or perceived, they may have with a coach's decisions or actions.

### **Before you sign your player up for Youth Football,**

as a parent you must understand that participation and playing time are two different things. You must understand that participation in practices is guaranteed to all players (at various levels depending on the position), but Playing Time in games for any player is not guaranteed and **will not** be equally divided among players on any team and that there is no minimum play requirement. A parent should carefully read and consider this policy before registering their player. Set your goals for yourself (and your player) accordingly.



### **Player Safety Is Priority One**

First and foremost, no matter the age division of a team, player safety is the number one factor in every decision that is made by a coach – including playing time.

### **Practice Time Policy**

Coaches always strive to give equal practice time for all players in their assigned position(s). However, be mindful, this is not always possible due to the simple structure of the game, the stature and abilities of each player and of course the goals of the team.

### **Playing Time Policy**

The factors used to determine playing time by a coach are dependent on the team's age division guidelines (below), the player's athleticism and their ability to execute the responsibilities of a given position in a given offensive or defensive scheme. Some players are simply better athletes than other players and for that reason they will see more time on the



field. For them, the playing time war is easily won. For others, it is a heart-wrenching battle every practice, every game. If your player is one of those who struggles with it, then you must remind them that there are things they can do to help their chances. For any player is to have any chance of reach their playing time goals, they must also exhibit these traits:

**Coachability:** Coaches love players who pay attention, listen, are respectful and follow instructions.

**Consistency:** Coaches look for athletes who they can depend on to show up at each game and practice and to do their job. Your player needs to play their position and do their job to the best of their ability every time.

**Hard work:** In games and in practice, coaches love players who give their all. If your athlete is serious about improving and getting more time, they must be willing to go the extra mile. They will be competing for positions against athletes that study the game, train hard and give their all.

**Attitude:** A bad attitude, negative talk, profanity, etc., from a player is a cancer to a team. Nothing will sink a players chances faster than if they exhibit these negative behaviors.

### **Playing “Both Ways”**

Coaches may have the same players on the starting squad for both the Offense and the Defense (i.e., playing “both ways”). While coaches would ideally like to have the 11 best offensive players and the 11 best defensive players add up to 22 individual players (none playing both ways), this is very seldom the case. The simple fact is some players are going to be better than others on both Offense and Defense. Coaches will always field their best 11 to start each game.

### **Offense, Defense & Special Teams: They don’t spend the same amount of time on the field**

While an offensive player may get equal time on the field as other offensive players, if the offense is not on the field as long as the defense or vice-versa, the playing time may differ greatly between offensive and defensive players and/or chances for backups for offense or defense to see much playing time.

### **Age Division Guidelines**

#### **Mighty Mites (5 & 6) Age Division Playing Time Policy**

For our young Mighty Mite teams, in the measuring of team success, the score and the player experience are equally important. Coaches are instructed to do their best to ensure that every player takes the field for every game and distribute playing time as equal as possible. Players may also have an opportunity to play several positions at this age depending on their abilities. The team is competing to win and hopefully at the same time give every player varying experience.

#### **Mini Mites (7 & 8) Age Division Playing Time Policy**



Starting in the Mini Mite age division, the success of the team on the game field is factored into the playing time decisions made by the coach. For our Mini Mite teams, coaches are instructed to be very mindful of playing time and do their best to ensure that every player takes the field for every game. In other words, the team is there to win and hopefully at the same time give every player some time on the field.

### **Mites Age (9 & 10) Division Playing Time Policy**

In the Mite age division, the success of the team on the game field is a key factor in determining what players are on the field. The team is there to win a football game. Starting at this age, there will be games with very close scores where some may not play.

### **Midget and Junior Age (11 & older) Division Playing Time Policy**

In the Midget and Junior Age Divisions, the game of football is totally different than the younger age divisions. The game is faster, the hits are harder and players are physically challenged each and every time they put on the pads. On the first day of practice, many players who walk onto the practice field will have spent months before the season working to prepare themselves both mentally and physically to play. Additionally, many players may have years of experience playing football and most likely on the same team. They are familiar with the offense and defense schemes of the team. These are typically the players who will get the most playing time. As the season progresses, other players may “show up” and start to play at a level that enables them to “take” a more prominent role on the team. In these age divisions, coaches are first and foremost entrusted with the winning tradition of NEP Wildcats Football. We want to win and we will try to win. Playing time is only guaranteed to those who are selected by the coaches to be starters on the Offense, Defense or Special Teams.

Parents of players who are unprepared to accept this policy should look to another park or sport for their player.

### **The Playing Time Exception for All Age Divisions**

Should any game score be “in hand” or “out of hand” then each coach should make sure, regardless of the age division, that every player receives playing time in the game. The score differential for this “pivot” point is determined by the coaches and may be different for each game. For example, some games where a team is up by 16 or more points, the lead can be lost in a matter of a few minutes. In other cases, a coach may feel confident enough to insert substitutes in a game that has a close score and still secure a win. However, if the scoreboard is turned off during a game (a lead of 30 or more points for one of the teams on the game field) then players who normally do not receive much playing time should be allowed to play their position for the duration of the game. Player safety should always be considered when making these coaching decisions.

**Who determines playing time?** While the Head Coach is the last word on game day concerning any playing time decision (or any other team decisions), all coaches select their starters and to make substitutions for their given area of coaching responsibility.

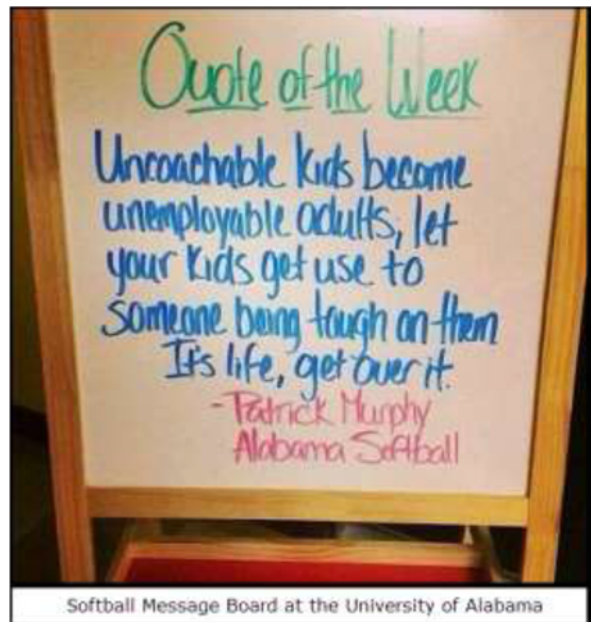


**As a parent of a player, what if I have a problem with decisions our coaches are making?** As a parent of a player, you may ask for an explanation of decisions made by your team's coaches. However, as stated above, playing time is a tender and emotional topic.

**This means these parent rights come with certain guidelines and a Parent Code of Conduct that you must follow:**

**Parents, conduct yourself with dignity.** You are required to act like an adult. Do not be one of "those" parents who loses control over a youth football game. You will not win any argument with disorderly behavior and there will be consequences.

**Encourage your player** to speak directly to their coaches and ask what they need to do to earn a starting position and/or get more playing time. In other words, look for ways to improve instead of blaming the coach and/or quitting the team – both very poor life lessons to teach a young person. Football is much like life – "let your player stand on their own and get use to someone being tough on them." "Let them work hard to achieve a goal without your interference."



**Never attempt to talk to a coach on game day –**

before, during or immediately after any game. If you are upset or have questions about playing time or any event in a game, put things in perspective and remain calm and collected. Give yourself time to gather your thoughts. There is a 24 hour mandatory cooling off period. Ask yourself, "is the issue I have a problem with acceptable or in violation of the Participation Policy?" "Is my grievance legitimate or are my expectations for my player unreasonable?" "Am I acting on my own vicarious ambitions?"

**If after 24 hours (or more) since the end of the game, if you feel you have a legitimate grievance or just want to talk to a coach about your player's situation,** give the head coach a call or text or email and request a private discussion with the coach at the next practice. Coaches will be open, honest and transparent with parents. Your coach will meet with you and answer your questions concerning your player's participation. Please be aware that there are many players on each team and it is simply unreasonable and unacceptable for you to request frequent meetings, meetings longer than a few minutes and meetings at any time or place other than at a regularly scheduled team practice.

**Hopefully, a friendly adult conversation, amongst reasonable people, will take place when you talk to your coach. However, if you have attempted this and still**



**feel you still have a grievance or concern that is not settled, you may contact the NEP Football Commissioner.** The NEP Football Commissioner will consult with the Head Coach and then resolve the matter in one of several available options:

- 1) Meet (or discuss via telephone) with the parties involved and resolve the matter; or
- 2) Call a meeting of the NEP Board to gather facts, discuss and resolve the matter (serious issues).

A decision by the NEP Board is final.

**NEP Football understands that the following statement simply will never apply to the majority of players, but for those that cannot conduct themselves accordingly, there is suspension from the park for players.**

A Head Coach can request of the NEP Board they review an issue(s) with a player and suspend the player from the team for a given period of time or permanently. This can result from player or parent behavior. The Head Coach can also suspend a player from any individual game (simply not play them) without NEP Board approval. Additionally, the league can suspend a player from a team for a given period or permanently.

Any disorderly conduct, threats, unwanted physical contact or other negative behavior towards a coach or anyone else will not be tolerated. The NEP Board will assess administrative penalties against you (typically suspensions from NEP facilities and any NEP activity – including other league parks) and may fine you (payable before you may every return or register for another season/sport at NEP). If you are suspended from NEP facilities and/or activities and you show up, we will have law enforcement escort you from the facility and issue you a trespass warning. Additionally, the NEP Board can also suspend a player for a given period of time or permanently based on the behavior of the player's parents.

If your behavior is criminal, such as what is defined in the Florida State Statute for breach of the peace/disorderly conduct (that we encourage you to read) or violates any other law(s) or ordinance(s), law enforcement will handle the matter with you directly.

***877.03 Breach of the peace; disorderly conduct.***—Whoever commits such acts as are of a nature to corrupt the public morals, or outrage the sense of public decency, or affect the peace and quiet of persons who may witness them, or engages in brawling or fighting, or engages in such conduct as to constitute a breach of the peace or disorderly conduct, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.