

Moorpark Packers Youth Football Coaches Handbook

So you are now a Head Coach in the Moorpark Packers Youth Football (MPPYF) organization... The best part of this program is all players get the opportunity to play and the more playing time each player gets the better for you and the program. This handbook can be a guide to helping you but it is not intended to be all the answers to every question you may find along the way. You can build your base for your coaching with your assistants, your fellow coaches in the MPPYF and if you are really daring your opponent coaches. Get to know them in the coach's clinics and during your System and Association meetings.

How do you build a successful program? If winning is all that matters than this is not the program for you. If you build your team to be the best they can be and improve each day you will succeed and the reward will be long lasting. No one can tell who will become the best player in the future. Building up the self esteem of each and every one of your players will be a lasting reward for both the coach and the player.

No coach can do it all by him or her self. You need assistant coaches and parent participation to build a successful team. Try to have at least 2 assistants, 1 adult to every 5 players on your team is optimal. If the MPPYF organization is to grow we will need coaches who have a working knowledge of the game and a history of working with youths to become a good Head Coach in the future. You can help build the program by having well trained coaches from your team become Head Coaches in the years ahead. Assign responsibilities for each assistant coach (Defensive coordinator, Offensive coordinator, Offense line, etc) and let them run the drill and help in the evaluation of their responsibility. Have meeting(s) of just the coaches to go over the drill and outline the schedule for practice prior to the first turnout. Hold meeting(s) during the season. Make sure you know and all assistants know the Gold Coast Youth Football League (GCYFL) rules.

Minimize parents from coaching their own child. It is usually best for the child if the parent is coaching an area that doesn't include them as a player. Caution the parent to not over coach the player to and from practice. The player will ask for help or advice from the parent. No other player on the team is coached to and from practice. Most parents are too critical as they know their child's faults and will not give them room to grow into the position they play.

All coaches should know the rules of the game. High school rule book are available from most Sports stores (Chicks, Athletic Supply, etc.) and the GCYFL rules are on the web site. Books and tapes are available on the drills and fundamentals of football. Clinics can be very helpful and are offered during the off season. Most High school coaches will hold clinics for a System if they can get a reasonable number of coaches to attend.

Parents can be your best asset or your worst nightmare. Send out a newsletter prior to the first practice (June if possible). Outline your season, when practice starts, Jamboree, post season play, etc. Attach a preliminary roster and encourage car pools to practice. Set your practice start time for a specific minute (i.e. 5:27pm to 7:27pm) they will remember a specific minute better than say 5:30 to 7:30. Practices should be a maximum of two hours and you will find you can accomplish everything in less time if you have a schedule and stick to the schedule. Never leave a player alone at the practice field at the end of the day. If you cannot stay, assign a trusted assistant to remain with the player(s) until they are picked up or give them a ride home. Plan a suit up party for your team, the best time is during the week just prior to the first practice. Plan the return of equipment at a designated location not more than one week after the season ends. If during the season a player quits you have one week to get the return of the uniform before you risk the lost of all his equipment.

Parent meetings, have several during the season. Have one during the first week of practice or just prior, introduce your assistant coaches, demonstrate the proper form for blocking and tackling with emphasis on the proper use of the helmet to prevent injury to the player. Have a team meeting including the parents after each game (15 minutes) to go over the next week of

practice and any special events. Rosters by game jersey number and alphabetical, along with game schedules will help the parents attend games. Set game day arrival times and a meeting place.

Sign up volunteers to work on the following:

1. Fund raising representative to coordinate your team participation in all System fund raising events.
2. Equipment manager to work on the equipment and coordinate the distribution and return of all equipment to your System. Your team should be represented at all work parties to improve the equipment for your System.
3. Picture Day coordinator, check with your System for the date and then be responsible for collecting information packs and distribution of the pictures to your team.
4. Pizza party during the season, plan a day after a game to go as a team to pizza parlor. It can be a great place to show game films but don't expect the players to watch for a prolonged time. The parents will be entertained.
5. Press box crew, if your home games are played at a High School Stadium you will need a scoreboard and clock operator.
6. Chain crew Captain, one adult that will see to it you have a three man crew at all away games ready 15 min. before game time. The crew is best run with three adults.
7. Video tape operator, this is best done by a non parent, if possible. Some High Schools have a program of video production, or Community College. It may cost to have the games video tape but they can be a great asset in developing your coaching. You can put together game films for your players and recoup your costs by selling game tape to your parents at the end of the season.
8. Team photographs during the season. They make a great scrapbook for coaches at the end of the season.
9. Refreshment coordinator for half time during games. Also, a special treat after a practice and/or after a game.
10. Statistics recorder during games. This can help you keep track of what works and along with the video recreate each play. If you add play by play to video the announcer can follow the game as it unfolds.
11. Team Mom can help with many of the activities above while developing a phone tree and running a lot of the other behind the scenes activities to make for a rewarding experience for everyone. Set up a committee to plan the end of the season party. Plan an after season party with awards.

How to manage the score during the game: If you teach all players how to play both offense and defense it will go a long way to developing your team. Any player that wants to carry the ball in scrimmage action should be afforded that opportunity during the season. If you have scouted a team or watch the scores in games preceding your game with a team, you will find a team that will afford your team the chance to play any player as a running back. If you score two TD in the first quarter and the other team is having trouble moving the ball, you should start making changes such as:

1. mix up your back field by allowing lineman to carry the ball.
2. run between the tackles.
3. if you are still moving the ball, set up field goal tries as you approach the other team's goal line.
4. On defense, unstack, don't blitz, set linebackers 5 yards deep, etc.
5. There is no award for keeping your opponent scoreless. Keep in mind, under these circumstances you also stifle your offense. If you have developed your team and you are as good a coach as you think, then switch your offense to defense and your defense to offense.
6. Give your lineman from offense the opportunity to play the defensive position of their choice.
7. Design a simple power running offense that allows rotation for all the new offensive players to have an opportunity to carry the ball.
8. If you have less than 22 players let the lesser athletic players go both ways.
9. You have the option to decline going for extra points

General outline for Practices: Need to be preplanned and followed to the plan. Time goes quickly and must be organized. Practice like you play! Need to be full or game speed! Younger kids need the more quantity in contact, as in repetition to build experience. Older kids are generally more experienced and need more quality time; they can get by with less contact; they probably already understand more and grasp the concepts. Apparatus such as dummies or sleds, arm pads are a plus as it allows the kids to go 100%. In August: 30 minutes of stretching, exercising, running and water! 1 hour of station breaks. Each coach would take a specific area, example: 1 tackling, 1 blocking, 1- offensive plays, 1-defensive scheming. Rotate positions every 10 minutes w/ breaks included. Depending on the level of team and experience, review player position at coaches meeting (15 min. after practice on the last practice of each week). If you have enough coaches or parent assistant coaches, they can work one on one with a player during that drill to help them improve fundamentally. In Sept.: 20 minutes of stretching, exercising; 20 minutes of blocking, tackling; 1 hour of scrimmage; 10 minutes of wind sprints. With only three days per week, assign one day to your defense, one day to offense, one day to special teams. The last day of the week should be limited contact. When scrimmage another team during the week don't have down time while your team is on offense (have the defensive players working on fundamentals) and conversely when on defense. In October: if you don't have lights, reduce practice time to 90 min. Determining positions is a talent in its self. At the lower levels (Mighty-Mights, Bantum and J1) it is usually best to start with the more experience players on offense. It is easier to teach defensive skills to the newer players. As you go up in the levels (J2 and Seniors) it is best to have a balance of talent on both offense and defense. Contact becomes more important at the upper levels. Don't stereotype players from year to year at one position.

Scouting: It is one of the most important yet unused advantages that a coach can have. The kids appreciate it as they know what formations the other team runs as well as what # player they are looking for and they do. It is also a good opportunity to talk with other coaches from your level that will be scouting the same game.

1. Look for team tendencies. By the formation, does the team shift heavy one side or the other and do they run that same way.
2. Position on the field. If they are on the right sideline marker, do they have a tendency to sweep to the left side and visa versa? If they line up in the middle, do they have a tendency to do up the middle?
3. Do they flop their linemen? Does the play follow a certain blocker?
4. Does a certain formation mean that they are going to pass? What number will they throw it to? Does that player line up at a different position on the line of scrimmage.
5. Write down the first 4 plays of the first half possession and 1st 4 plays of the 2nd half possession. Many coaches use the same series each game. This can create a big mental advantage.
6. What is their tendency on 3rd down short? 3rd down 5 yards, 3rd down 10+ yards.
7. By the 4th quarter you should be able to figure out what the team tendencies are before the snap of the ball.
8. Know where their strength is and where their weakness is. If you have a 4th down and are running the ball, you need to run it to their weakness.

Coach/Referee Communication

Just as much as the playbook, game plan, and defensive schemes are a part of the game of football, so is the relationship between the officials and the coaches. The most important aspect of this relationship is how we both communicate with each other. The old adage of "treat others as you would want to be treated" applies. A coach who constantly yells, berates, and argues with every call, made or not made, loses credibility and respect in the eyes of the officials. In the same way coaches do not respect officials who ignore them, refuse to listen to what they say, or are just plain unapproachable. These types of attitudes foster and maintain an adversarial relationship, which makes the sidelines an unpleasant place for coaches and officials alike. How do we move past that type of relationship towards one based upon mutual respect of the jobs each other is doing? The key is effective communication. Some of the major points are as follows:

1. **Speak to the officials in calm tone:** This is hard considering that football is an emotional game and people get caught up in the moment. You would not yell at a police officer in the heat of a traffic stop. Officials are not a police officer, but they are responsible for enforcing the rules of the game equitably for all sides. Officials do not care who wins or loses the game. They do not see teams in terms "Moorpark" vs "Simi Valley" but in terms of offense vs defense. Ask your side official for an explanation of the call or the rule. If he doesn't have all the information, he should be able to get it for you. Remember there is a game going on and the explanation may come a few plays later. If you really feel the rule has been misinterpreted, you have the option for a referee/coach conference. Ask your questions in a respectful and calm tone and listen to the answers. Do not interrupt the officials when they are trying to answer your question.
2. **Know the Rules:** Nothing will destroy your credibility faster than arguing a basic rule or is applying a college or NFL rule to the game governed by High School rules. An example, "that ball was uncatchable" on a pass interference call does not apply in High School rules. Officials spend a lot of time studying and learning the rules, so they have a good grasp of what the rules are and how to apply them to the junior program. Officials, like other humans, make mistakes and may on occasion misinterpret the rules. But just like a player misses the snap count or commits a foul, these are not done on purpose.
3. **Never argue a judgment call:** This again is difficult because the call may have gone the other way. The ruling official, in his/her opinion, had a foul or didn't have a foul and calls it like he/she sees it. Remember each official works a specific zone and the other officials may not have even seen what another official sees or doesn't see because they are catching their respective area on the field. Before any foul is administered, the crew gets together and discusses what happened and if anyone saw the play differently, that is the opportunity for other officials to provide input. Remember the officials are not out to "get anyone". Some other common sense basics are don't call the officials names, attack their integrity, or try to intimidate the officials. These tactics will get you no where except possibly tossed out of the game. The officials are out there for the same reason you are, for the kids. This is a youth football game and the players and fans are watching and learning from the adult actions and interaction on the field. What type of example will you be? As human nature would have it, how you treat the officials is likely to directly influence the respect and treatment you receive.