

Coaching Football FOR **DUMMIES®**

**by National Alliance For Youth Sports
with Greg Bach**



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About the Authors

The **National Alliance For Youth Sports** has been America's leading advocate for positive and safe sports for children for the past 25 years. It serves volunteer coaches, parents with children involved in organized sports, game officials, youth sports administrators, league directors, and the youngsters who participate in organized sports. The Alliance's programs are utilized in more than 3,000 communities nationwide by parks and recreation departments, Boys & Girls Clubs, Police Athletic Leagues, YMCAs/YWCAs, and various independent youth service groups, as well as on military installations worldwide. For more information on the Alliance's programs, which are listed below, visit www.nays.org.

National Youth Sports Coaches Association — More than 2 million volunteer coaches have been trained through NYSCA, which provides training, support, and continuing education.

Parents Association for Youth Sports — Parents gain a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in youth sports through this sportsmanship training program, which is used in more than 500 communities nationwide.

Academy for Youth Sports Administrators — More than 2,000 administrators worldwide have gone through the Academy, which is a 20-hour certification program that raises the professionalism of those delivering youth sport services. A professional faculty presents the information, and participants earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs).

National Youth Sports Administrators Association — This program provides training, information, and resources for volunteer administrators responsible for the planning and implementation of out-of-school sports programs.

National Youth Sports Officials Association — Officials who go through this certification program gain valuable knowledge on skills, fundamentals, and the characteristics that every good official must possess.

Start Smart Sports Development Program — This proven instructional program prepares children for the world of organized sports without the threat of competition or the fear of getting hurt through an innovative approach that promotes parent-child bonding.

Hook A Kid On Golf — Thousands of children of all ages and skill levels tee it up every year in the nation's most comprehensive junior golf development program, which features an array of instructional clinics and tournaments to choose from.

Game On! Youth Sports — This worldwide effort introduces children to actual game experience by giving them the freedom to create and play on their own.

Greg Bach is the communications director for the National Alliance For Youth Sports, a position he has held since 1993. Before joining NAYS, he worked as the sports editor of the *Huron Daily Tribune* in Bad Axe, Michigan, where he captured numerous writing awards from the Associated Press, Michigan Press Association, and the Hearst Corporation. He has a journalism degree from Michigan State University, which he earned in 1989. He's an avid sports fan and has coached a variety of youth sports. He also wrote *Coaching Soccer For Dummies*.

Dedication

From National Alliance For Youth Sports: This book is dedicated to all the volunteer football coaches who give up countless hours of their free time to work with children and ensure that they have positive, safe, and rewarding experiences. We applaud their efforts and commend them for making a difference in the lives of youngsters everywhere.

From Greg Bach: This one's for Kayla and Evan, my two favorite football fans.

Authors' Acknowledgments

A successful youth football program doesn't just happen. It takes a real commitment not only from dedicated volunteer coaches but also from parents who understand their roles and responsibilities and league directors and administrators who know what it takes to ensure that every child who steps on the football field in their community has a safe, fun, and rewarding experience. Football plays an important role in the lives of millions of children and provides them with the opportunity to learn the skills of the game, as well as the chance to develop both emotionally and physically as individuals. The National Alliance For Youth Sports extends a heartfelt thank-you to every person who makes a positive difference through football in the life of a child.

This book is the result of a lot of hours of hard work from a lot of great people, and a huge thank-you goes out to the incredibly talented staff at Wiley. First, to Stacy Kennedy, the acquisitions editor, whose efforts behind the scenes in working with the National Alliance For Youth Sports has resulted in this being the second book in a series for youth coaches; Chrissy Guthrie and Danielle Voirol, the project editor and copy editor, whose editing touches, ideas, and insight made a tremendous difference in the quality of every chapter; the fabulous effort of the illustrators — Shelley Norris, Jake Mansfield, Joni Burns, and Karl Brandt — whose work will be great references as you teach your team all sorts of football skills; and Robert Patchett, who was a terrific asset with all of his valuable knowledge about every aspect of the game.

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Introduction

Welcome to *Coaching Football For Dummies*, a book dedicated to all the wonderful volunteer coaches everywhere who work with kids in this magnificent sport. We hope you find it informative, entertaining, and — most important of all — useful in helping ensure that every child on your team has a fun, safe, and rewarding experience. After all, that's what coaching's really all about.

About This Book

We wrote this book for first-time volunteer football coaches looking for some guidance before they step on the field, as well as those coaches who've been on the sidelines for a season or two and are interested in gaining more insight on specific areas of the game. If you're new to the sport, you may be somewhat nervous about what you've gotten yourself into. You can take comfort in knowing that this book can help you shove those concerns aside and put you at ease as you head into the season. It'll be your handy companion as you embark down the path toward guiding the kids to a fun-filled, stress-free season.

Each chapter is filled with all sorts of useful and straightforward information. The more chapters you knock off, the more knowledgeable you'll be about this great game and how to teach it, and the smiles on the kids' faces — as well as all the learning and skill development that take place — will be your payoff. We also include plenty of information for those of you who are veterans of the post-season pizza parties and have spent countless evenings at your local football field. We cover everything from drills you can use to raise players' skills a notch or two to details on offensive and defensive formations and how to coach special teams, among many other areas.

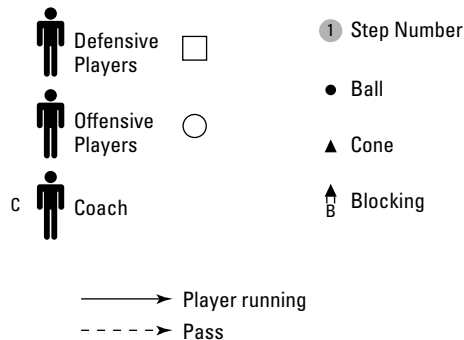
One of the really cool things about this book is that you can jump in anywhere. If you're a rookie coach, you probably have questions on everything from how to plan an effective practice to what to say to the team after a loss. Just check out the Table of Contents or the Index for the topic you want to find out more about, and then flip right there to get the scoop. Each chapter is divided into sections, and each section contains information on a specific topic concerning coaching youth football.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate through this book, we use the following conventions:

- ✓ *Italics* is used for emphasis and to highlight new words and terms defined in the text.
- ✓ **Boldfaced** text indicates keywords in bulleted lists or the action parts of numbered steps.
- ✓ `Monofont` is used for Web addresses. If you happen to find that a specific address in this book has changed, try scaling it back by going to the main site — the part of the address that ends in .com, .org, or .edu.
- ✓ Sidebars are shaded gray boxes that contain text that's interesting to know but not critical to your understanding of the chapter or topic.
- ✓ In many cases, girls have the legal right to play football, but because the boys in youth football outnumber the girls by so much, this book refers to players as though they were all male. However, most information in this book applies to girls as well.

We've also packed this book full of diagrams of practice drills that you can work on with your team. The following chart is the key to understanding all the hieroglyphics.



What You're Not to Read

Hey, if it were us, we'd read this book from front to back in just a couple days. That's how good — and informative — we think it is. If you're short on time, though, we'll let you in on a little secret: You don't have to read every single word, because this is a reference book. To help you get through the book a little more quickly, when you see sidebars, feel free to jump right over them like a running back hurdling a would-be tackler. You don't need that text to understand what it takes to be a top-quality football coach. So sit back, relax

and — excuse the pun — tackle these chapters at your own pace. If you have time, between your soon-to-be busy schedule of practices and games, we'd love to know what you think of the book.

Foolish Assumptions

Here are some things that we've assumed about you:

- ✔ You know that football is a contact sport played with lots of equipment.
- ✔ You have a child who's interested in strapping on a helmet this year, but you're a little unsure how to teach the game.
- ✔ You're a novice youth football coach and you need to get your coaching skills up to speed.
- ✔ You don't have aspirations of climbing the coaching ladder and pacing the sidelines as a high school football coach in the near future.
- ✔ You just want the basics on topics like what to do during the first practice of the season, how to determine who plays where, and how to teach youngsters the safe way to tackle.
- ✔ You're coaching an older and more advanced team for the first time and need some good drills to challenge the kids to help elevate their skills.
- ✔ The kids on your team have lots of football experience and you're unsure how to go about upgrading the offense, defense, and special teams.

If any of these descriptions hit the mark, you've come to the right place.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into parts, each one pertaining to a specific aspect of coaching a youth football team. Parts contain related chapters. Here's a quick rundown of what you can find in each part of this book.

Part 1: Kids' Play: Getting Started Coaching Football

Coaching youth football can be a real challenge, and what you do before you and your team ever step on the field can make the difference between a fun-drenched, problem-free season and one that crumbles amid chaos and confusion. In this part, you get the lowdown on constructing a coaching philosophy

that you're comfortable with, one that your players and their parents will accept rather than turn their backs on. You also find out what all those lines and numbers on the field mean and get a crash course on offside, illegal motion, and the other penalties and rules of the game.

Part II: Building Your Football Coaching Skills

This is where the real fun — and actual coaching — begin. Before you actually step on the field, though, this section provides valuable information on how to conduct a preseason parents meeting, an often overlooked aspect of coaching youth football that's crucial for opening the lines of communication, reducing the chances of misunderstandings and hurt feelings, and keeping your sanity. This part also answers questions such as

- ✓ How do I figure out who plays where?
- ✓ How do I conduct practices that the kids look forward to?
- ✓ How do I work with the uncoordinated, shy, and talented kids all at once?
- ✓ How do I assess my team at midseason and ensure it's headed in the right direction?

Plus, we show you the game-day ropes, touching on everything from your pre-game and post-game talks to conducting an efficient warm-up and making those critical halftime adjustments.

Part III: Working with Beginning and Intermediate Players

Teaching kids the basics of the game — from tackling and blocking to running and catching — is crucial for their long-term enjoyment of the sport. This section shares how you can do that by providing a variety of fun-filled drills that are highly effective for teaching skills. Also, when your team has a pretty good handle on some of the basics, check out the chapter devoted to kicking those skills up another notch or two.

Part IV: Advanced Football Strategies

When your players have a pretty good grasp of the basics of the game, they're hungry to learn more-advanced skills and continue their development. This section does the trick. The pages are filled with in-depth

techniques for raising the level of play on offense, defense, and special teams. There's also an assortment of drills that you can use to help your players maximize their development.

Part V: The Extra Points

This section is a smorgasbord of information on several topics that we hope you won't face much this season, such as recognizing injuries, confronting problem parents, and dealing with discipline problems on your team. You also find valuable information on pre- and post-game nutrition that you can share with your team to help boost their performance. And for those of you with your eye on coaching an All-Star team, you find all the information you need to help make your transition to a more competitive level of football a smooth one.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

A For Dummies book just wouldn't be complete without this section. Here you find all sorts of precious information that you can put to use to boost the fun and enjoyment your team has playing for you this season. We include information on how to make the season memorable and fun ways to end on a high note and keep 'em coming back next year.

Icons Used in This Book



This icon signals valuable tips that can save you time and frustration and really enhance your coaching skills. If you're scanning a chapter, take a moment to read these tips when you come across them, and then put them to work. You — and your players — will be glad you did.



A lot goes into coaching youth football. This icon alerts you to key information that's worth revisiting. You want to remember this info even after you close the book.



Watch out! This icon lets you know about situations that can be dangerous.

Where to Go from Here

If this season is your first on the sidelines as a volunteer youth football coach, you may be most comfortable digging in with Chapter 1 and moving forward from there. Please note, though, that the book is structured so that you can easily move around from chapter to chapter at your convenience. So if you need answers to some of your most pressing early-season questions, you can scan the Table of Contents or Index for those topics and jump right to those chapters. Otherwise, start from the beginning and use the information you gather along the way to help ensure that your youth football team has a fun, safe, and memorable season.

Part I

Kids' Play: Getting Started Coaching Football

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Cameron's approach to coaching youth football is a combination of Vince Lombardi, Dr. Phil, and Harry Potter."

In this part . . .

Before taking the field with your team for the first time, you can follow several steps to lay the groundwork for a smoothly running season. Defining your coaching philosophy, knowing your league's rules and regulations, having a handle on the basic rules of football, and gathering the parents for a preseason meeting can get your season headed in the right direction. You can find all that information, and more, right here.