



The Future of the DJFL in Darien

March 7th, 2019



DJFL Overview

DJFL MISSION STATEMENT

- The overall objective of the DJFL program is to provide a *positive introductory and developmental experience* in the sport of football for all its participants.
- The ultimate goal of the program is to *stimulate and develop the potential and passion* of each-and-every football player in the program.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

The most important goal of the program is to provide a *safe and healthy environment* for learning the game of football. This includes:

- a) developing fundamental football skills;
- b) fostering/modeling a genuine passion for the sport; and
- c) instilling character and good sportsmanship

A secondary goal is to provide a *positive and inspiring experience in team sports* for all participants.

This includes:

- a) getting to know and respect other players;
- b) being treated with respect as a valued member of a team; and
- c) having an opportunity to improve as a football player and contribute to a team

A third goal of the program is to coordinate with the Darien High School football coaching staff with *the primary objective being developing -- and maintaining the interest of -- as many prospective high school football players as possible*. With this goal in mind, every participant in the program will be given ample opportunity to develop multiple skills and to participate in game situations.

DJFL Overview

PHILOSOPHY

Development vs. Winning



*Developing football players
(technique, knowledge and
love of the game)*

*Getting all kids involved
(No cuts, balanced teams,
multiple offenses, more
than one QB)*

*Teamwork
("as 11 we are 1 Blue
Wave")*

*Individual development
(pushed outside comfort
zone, challenging yourself,
being accountable)*



Safety

FACTS & STATISTICS

The DJFL program is **designed for and committed to player safety**. Our philosophy is simple: create an environment that is designed to prevent injuries from incurring. Our consistently low incidents of concussion and/or player injury is a result of this commitment.

- Four specific examples of our framework for delivering a safe football environment for Darien players are our focus on:
 - a) Modified Tackle Program;
 - b) Coach Education and Training;
 - c) Licensed and Certified Athletic Trainers at all home games; and
 - d) Concussion baseline testing (and post-concussion testing) at our cost

Since moving fully to “Modified Tackle”

- 2017: 290 players with 17 football-related injuries, including 4 concussions
- 2018: 221 players with 16 football-related injuries, including 6 concussions

Safety



MODIFIED TACKLE

Over the years, **we have implemented many on-field safety measures** to reduce the chances of player injury, including the following:

- All players must complete *three days of football skill conditioning before* advancing to wearing full pads (this is to acclimate to heat of August and the helmet)
- We *limit full contact tackling* in practices throughout the season. All of our drills are designed to teach safe tackling techniques. Coaches spend the vast majority of their time teaching skills at half speed and with limited contact to instill the proper techniques for safe play.
- To reduce high speed tackling in live games there are: *no kickoff returns in grades 3rd through 8th grade; no live punt returns in grade 3rd through 6th grade; and a modified, no rush punt return is allowed in 7th and 8th grades.*
- Our football league, the Fairfield County Football League (FCFL) has strict rules *prohibiting helmet contact* in games and our referees are highly focused ensuring safe play.
- The FCFL also *enforces strict weight and age limits* in each grade which limits certain players to interior line positions (all players are weighed before games).



Safety

MODIFIED TACKLE - Continued

“Limited” vs. “Unlimited”

- Mandatory weigh-ins before each game
- Playing at “unlimited” positions (may play any position) must weigh-in at no more than the designated weight of their grade level.
- A player who weighs over the “unlimited” weight for their grade level, must play an interior line “limited” position. “Limited” positions include only OT/OG/C/DT/DG.

Grade	Unlimited Weight	Maximum Age by Feb 1 st
Bantam 3 rd	90	8
Bantam 4 th	100	9
Junior 5 th	110	10
Junior 6 th	125	11
Senior 7 th	140	12
Senior 8 th	155	14 Max by 8/1

- Hawk Tackling – What is this?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1etzT-Cgho>
- O-Rings vs. Live Tackling – How do we use the equipment?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=44&v=DnxwC6jJJIM



Safety

COACH EDUCATION & TRAINING

Every DJFL coach is required to take and be certified in live and online courses through USA Football

- 1) All coaches are USA Football Certified; an approximately 20 hour online course covering:
 - a) Blocking / Defeating Blocks
 - b) Shoulder Tackling (“HAWK” Tackling)
 - c) Equipment Fitting
 - d) Concussions
 - e) Heat Illness / Heat Stroke Prevention
 - f) Sudden Cardiac Arrest
- 2) All coaches are First Aid and CPR certified
- 3) All coaches attend multiple live “teach-in” sessions with Fairfield County Varsity Coaches as well as Coach Trifone on specific techniques, FCFL coaches clinic is scheduled for June 8th

EQUIPMENT

- Only *certified and properly reconditioned* helmets may be worn
 - DJFL uses Riddell Helmets and which are continuously reconditioned. Please take a look at the link below to see how the tests are run and the outcome of the testing.
 - <http://www.riddell.com/reconditioning>
- Shoulder pads – DJFL replaced all shoulder pads at the start of the 2018 season
- All players must wear colored mouth-guard while the ball is in play
- All equipment/pads must meet scholastic guidelines

Safety



DJFL STRICT INJURY PROCEDURES / CONCUSSION PROTOCOL

- If a player sits out a practice or game due to a possible or perceived injury, the Head Coach will bring your son to you afterward and discuss the injury. He will not permit the player to play or practice until you or your son's doctor, if applicable, to inform him in writing (preferably in email) that he is cleared to resume playing or practicing.
- If a player is suspected of receiving a concussion, the following will happen:
 - a) The Head Coach will immediately pull him out of practice or the game.
 - b) Player will be evaluated by coaching staff (practice)/Athletic trainer (games) and parents will be notified by phone or asked to come to sideline for consultation regarding injury.
 - c) For any head injury, you will need to produce a doctor's letter clearing your son to resume normal physical activities, which is usually 10-14 days, however can take up to several weeks.
 - d) Athletic trainers will work with parents/doctors to formulate plan for recovery.
- DJFL highly *encourages all players to get Base Line concussion testing* before the season begins.
- DJFL has certified trainers at every home game to help identify possible injuries.



Safety

PERFORMANCE PHYSICAL THERAPY *(Implemented in 2018)*

- Performance Physical Therapy (PPT) is a physical therapy and wellness company located in Darien with other locations in Stamford, Greenwich, Westport, Hamden & NYC. Additional FCFL teams utilize their services so there is continuity across FCFL.
- PPT's athletic trainers are on site for all home games offering pre-game injury management and prevention, and are available to answer any questions coaches, athletes, or parents may have.
- For any injuries that occur, the trainer will be there to immediately assess the injury, and then PPT will help the families facilitate and communicate with physicians and therapists if needed. PPT will be available to directly assist parents in managing any injuries that happen to their children.
- PPT's Head Athletic Trainer Dwayne Hagenow is available for any questions throughout the season by emailing him at dwayne@performance-pt.com.
- Additionally, each season DJFL will be assigned a primary Athletic Trainer, for the 2018 season our primary trainer was Eric Faatz. Eric's contact information is ericf@performance-pt.com and his cell is (973) 903-6665.

Safety



CONCUSSION PROTOCOL – BASELINE TESTING (FREE)

- PPT utilizes ImPACT (Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) as one of the resources to help better manage any possible head injuries.
- ImPACT is a computerized concussion management tool utilized by medical professionals that allow athletes to take a baseline test prior to the start of the season and then take post-injury tests after sustaining any head injuries.
- The data from the tests will be used, in conjunction with PPT's medical team's evaluations, to see where any neuro-cognitive changes may have occurred following an injury. PPT's Athletic Trainers and physicians will use this data along with their clinical evaluations to better diagnose head injuries as well as to help better understand what areas of the brain may be impaired following a head injury.
- This is done by comparing the baseline test scores (your child's normal brain function) with post-injury test scores to see where any deficiencies may be.

BASELINE TESTING – NEXT STEPS

- Email PPT to schedule an appointment for testing. The testing only takes around 20-30 minutes and will be at DJFL's cost. PPT will conduct these tests Monday-Friday. To schedule a test you can contact Eric Faatz at ericf@performance-pt.com and his cell is (973) 903-6665.
- Below is a link for more information on Performance PT as well as ImPACT:
 - <http://performance-pt.com>
 - <https://www.impacttest.com>



Commitment

COMMITMENT

Given that participation in the DJFL is a commitment that comes with responsibilities, each player (and his parents) must clearly understand the expectations required of him, including:

- attending all practices and games (or notifying the coaches well ahead of time if absence is anticipated)
- being on time, dressed and ready-to-go
- having the proper equipment and water
- maintaining a good, positive attitude and appropriate behavior; working as hard as possible to become a better football player
- at all times, striving to represent Darien with pride

TACKLE FOOTBALL IS “TRAVEL LEVEL” COMMITMENT

Football should be the priority sport for the entire course of the season.

- We expect and encourage all of our athletes to play other sports during the rest of the year, as it increases athletic development and adds to players’ enthusiasm for all sports they play. But we require that during our relatively short season, you choose football over other sporting event conflicts (this does not preclude you from playing – just means “prioritizing”)
- **Excused Absences** include: Religion, School, Music/Dance/Theater Recitals (not practices), and special Family commitments.
- **Unexcused Absences** include: Other Sports, Select Team practices/games/tournaments (including club lacrosse, soccer, crew, swimming, etc.)



Development

TACKLE vs. FLAG

When is it appropriate to make the switch?

- It is very important to learn the core techniques of tackle football as early as possible.
- Repetition of the key techniques involved in both blocking and tackling are best learned early, at lower weights, size and speed, which allows the young athletes to continue to develop these skills at each interval in size.
- The DJFL has offered Tackle football for 3rd graders but continues to support the Flag Program for 3rd graders as well.
- By 4th grade, the Board's suggestion is for the athletes to make the switch to tackle.

The FCFL is moving to a new Modified Flag Travel Football model for 2019 at the 3rd grade level



Development

DEVELOPMENT

- Start young in the DJFL Flag Program – learn the basics
- Emphasis is on fundamentals throughout DJFL – blocking and tackling
- Coach Trifone’s Summer Camps (both tackle/non-tackle) – get exposed to new drills, have fun
- 7x7 League Development / Passing League Development

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT / OPPORTUNITIES NOT AVAILABLE

- Camaraderie / Friendship – Football is ultimate Team sport – DHS Football is a very successful program with almost no superstars – focus is on team
- Discipline – Practice is repetition, focus on skills, following directions, Moving in unison, success comes from “Doing your job”
- Work Ethic – hard work, but done together – team conditioning
- Physical and Mental Toughness
- **One of the only major DHS team that does not make cuts!** If you commit yourself to the sport, you will be part of something at the Varsity level. No other sport can say this. Coach Trifone and Staff will get you on the field. Football has 22 positions, very few play both ways, plus another 20 on special teams



Questions & Answers...

For additional information please go to www.djfl.com

Please do not hesitate to contact us at:

Executive Committee – DJFL

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Important Dates

March 7th -- DJFL information session

April 15th -- Online registration opens

May 16th -- Registration fees increase

Late May/Early June equipment pickups -- TBD

Early June-- 7x7 Tournament (6th through 8th grade)

June /July-- Trifone HS Camps (see Darien Town website or DJFL website for Details)

July 31st -- Registration closes

August 19th -- Pre-season practice starts

August 31st / September 1st -- Jamboree

September 7th / 8th -- Regular season begins