

Frequently Asked Questions HIGHLANDER YOUTH TACKLE FOOTBALL

1. Under what league does Highlander Youth Tackle Football play?

Highlander Youth Tackle Football remains a member of the New Jersey Suburban Youth Football League (NJSYFL), a 20-team league made up two divisions organized by towns of similar populations to ensure competitive play. Visit the league website at www.njsyfl.com for more information.

2. How is the NJSYFL different from other leagues?

The NJSYFL has long followed their own ERB (Eligible Running Back) rule, which restricts athletes from running or handling the ball, on offense, based on their weight. This rule is intended to minimize the amount of times a lighter defender must tackle a heavier player. ERB's get a special sticker on their helmet so the referees always know who is eligible. This applies to the position of QB, RB, WR, and TE. The maximum weight to be eligible is:

- A Team – Grade 8 – 160.9 lbs
- B Team – Grade 7 – 135.9 lbs
- C Team – Grade 6 – 120.9 lbs
- D Team – Grade 5 – 105.9 lbs
- E Team – Grades 3 & 4 – 90.9 lbs

ERB's must meet the above weight limit at the start of the season to be eligible for the season. They must then make that weight on game day every week to be eligible for that week's game.

3. When and where will practices be scheduled?

This year, with COVID-19 restrictions aside, teams will be permitted to start practice on August 10th. This is one week earlier than usual to give coaches more time to get their teams ready for their first full contact scrimmage. We are hoping this makes it easier to accommodate summer vacation schedules as coaches can more gradually advance through their conditioning and practice schedules and still have time to catch up kids who miss practice due to vacations.

Summer practices will be Monday through Thursday evenings at Snyder Field. Once school begins, practices will typically occur on Tuesday and Thursday evenings only.

4. Do all levels practice together?

Usually. Coaches are free to adjust their team's individual schedule to best fit the needs of the team, pending field availability. Even when all levels practice at the same time, the teams mostly break up into team-only practices after initial warm-ups.

5. *When and where will games be scheduled?*

Games are usually on Sunday mornings and afternoons. Some towns have rules about playing on Sunday so they only host games on Saturday. Teams will play home games at Governor Livingston High School, but we were able to schedule a Saturday night game at Snyder last year.

Sunday games usually follow the schedule below, but that often changes since many towns do not have enough levels to field 5 full teams.

- D Team – Grade 5 – 9:00 AM
- C Team – Grade 6 – 10:30 AM
- B Team – Grade 7 – 12:00 PM
- A Team – Grade 8 – 1:45 PM
- E Team – Grades 3 & 4 – 3:30 PM

6. *How many players are required at any given level?*

The ideal number of players for any level is 18-25. A minimum of 18 helps ensure a full team with adequate substitutions while accounting for injuries or illness. While not a maximum, having 25 or less kids helps ensure adequate playing time for all players.

7. *What if there are not enough kids to create a team at a given level?*

If the number of registered players for any level is below the number deemed safe and practical for a team, the players at that level will have one of two options:

- A. Play at the next highest level. Note: this not an option for 3rd and 8th graders, and coaches and parents will confer regarding any player's readiness to play up a level.
- B. Play at their age level for a neighboring town under the league's new "Border Agreement"

8. *What is the "Border Agreement?"*

If a town does not have enough players to field a team at a given level, a neighboring town agrees to accommodate any player that would prefer to play with the neighboring town at their age-appropriate level instead of at a higher level for their own town. A player playing for a neighboring town will attend all practices and play all games with the neighboring town. The goal is to enable any player to play at their appropriate level for the most enjoyable football experience.

9. *How do you ensure adequate playing time for all players?*

The NJSYFL follows a minimum playing time rule. The number of players on a roster dictate the minimum number of plays each player should get. Each team is required to keep a record of plays played and turn that record in to the opposing coach after the game. Punishment for not following this rule can include a suspension for the offending coach.

10. How and when will equipment and uniforms be distributed?

This summer will be more challenging due to COVID-19 restrictions, but equipment fitting and uniform distribution will occur at the equipment shed at Snyder Field. Fittings will be by appointment organized through Sign-Up Genius. More detail will be communicated once timing of the season is further understood. Preferably, uniform fittings occur by end-July to allow time for the receipt of personalized game jerseys before the season opener.

11. What else does the NJSYFL and BHPAL do to ensure player safety?

Once again we intend to participate in Tip of the Spear training for all coaches and players. Tip of the Spear was created by former NFL players to improve technique and help eliminate helmet-to-helmet impact when blocking and fighting off blocks. This training has been adopted by many high school, college, and NFL programs. Of course, scheduling of this training in 2020 will depend on the COVID-19 situation.

All NJSYFL coaches are also required to be certified by USA football on safe, heads-up tackling and concussion awareness. Coaches are not allowed on the field during the game without their USA Football certification prominently displayed.

Finally, all NJSYFL games are required to be played with a medical trainer present on the sidelines and any coach is authorized to request a player from either team be evaluated by the trainer if any injury is suspected.

It is this commitment to player safety that has enabled the NJSYFL to exist and grow since 1972 while other leagues shrink or disband all together. The NJSYFL requires all new programs to enter on a probationary basis and has removed towns from the league for rule violations.