

LIBERTYVILLE WILDCAT YOUTH SPORTS: FLYWEIGHT FAQs

Can my athlete transfer from Flag to Tackle?

Q: I signed my child up for fall flag, can he transfer to tackle football?

A: Yes of course! Reach out to our league's [President](#) to switch over the registration. The money you paid will be applied to the tackle registration.

I am worried about safety.

Q: My child loves football, but I am worried he is too young for tackle football. Is it safe to start this young?

A: Yes! Many would argue it's the safest age to start. Here's why:

- 1) **Better Equipment** - Youth tackle football equipment, particularly the helmets and shoulder pads, have made incredible strides over the last decade to enhance player safety. Everyone who sees our equipment comments on how much better it is than when they played. It continues to get better every year. Most of the LWYS tackle program budget goes into updating equipment each year. We ensure our athletes have access to the best, and safest equipment possible.
- 2) **Better Instruction and Techniques** - Proper instruction and emphasis on "heads-up" and "hawk tackling" fundamentals have changed the safety of the game for the better. Pioneered in the NFL in the last 20 years, and passed down to lower levels of play, it resulted in safer tackling and less injuries. All coaches are USA certified in teaching these techniques, and athletes have benefitted.
- 3) **Better pace of instruction and focus on fundamentals at the younger ages translates to safer play and more success at later stages** – Many competitive youth tackle programs start their players at K-1, and/or 2-3rd grade teams. When kids sign up to play tackle at these younger ages, they generally have a better introductory experience to the game, with a longer time to learn fundamentals in a low intensity environment, with peers (and opponents) who are all starting from the same spot as novices. We have seen that the kids who start playing earlier have the best techniques and confidence level as they play in the older divisions, resulting in less likelihood of injury due to improper technique or lack of confidence. To the contrary, the later a child starts playing tackle football, oftentimes the more of an uphill battle he has (and we as a program have) to build his confidence and grow his love for the game, while also ensuring the safest play.
- 4) **The younger sizes/slower speeds + better equipment = fewer injuries.** In our program, and the TCYFL in general, most injuries do not happen until the higher age levels at 7th-8th grade. Even then they are rarer than they have ever been in football. The younger kids are not coordinated or fast enough to collide at dangerous speeds, and when they do, the equipment is of such high quality that it prevents injury. These findings have also been backed up by scientific studies. Many parents, particularly those new to the sport of football, often relay stories of how their kids sustained serious injuries playing other supposedly less intense sports (basketball, baseball, soccer, and even flag football etc.), but how shocked they were that their athlete and his friends never sustained any serious injuries playing tackle football. This is credited with the much better equipment and enhanced instruction focused on safe play.

While there is always some risk in any sport, starting your child playing tackle football at a young age is the least risky time to have him play with regard to serious injury in our experience, and the best time to have him start from a developmental perspective.

What type of Equipment?

Q: What type of equipment will Flyweight players get?

A: Flyweight players will get the same equipment as other levels, but with this new division, they will get the newest, safety-focused helmets and shoulder pads designed specifically for players in their age group.

Flag vs Tackle?

Q: Is Flag Football Safer than Tackle Football?

A: Scientific studies have found that flag football, due to the lack of equipment, is at a minimum not statistically different from tackle football in terms of injuries and might result in a higher number of injuries overall.

Q: Won't my athlete still develop as a football player by playing flag football instead of tackle?

A: Yes and no. Flag football is fine to learn basics of the game of football, like throwing, catching, and pass coverage, but those skills don't count for much in tackle football as all kids have adequate skills in these areas. Critical tackle football skill development revolves around contact, proper blocking and tackling, and the numerous additional positions, coverage sets, and pace of play that is different from flag football. Many youth tackle football programs do not have flag programs, or if they do, they cap enrollment age at an early age. The reason for this is that most programs believe allowing players to play flag football as they get older (instead of tackle football) will ultimately handicap a player's eventual tackle football development and make it more likely the athlete will never get the opportunity to properly learn the game before discouragement sets in.

At LWYS, we have seen a negative impact on some kid's enthusiasm for the sport and confidence in their play, particularly those who are bigger for their age and/or not as fast, since flag football has an overemphasis on speed due to the lack of contact and lower number of positions. Some younger athletes felt like they were not good football players simply because they were not fast or agile enough to be considered "good" at flag football. While every rep throwing and catching a football, whether in the backyard or by playing flag football, is ok for a child, the only way your athlete can truly develop the necessary skillset to be successful at tackle football is by playing tackle football. There is no substitute.

Age/Grade and Weight Requirements or Restrictions

Q: What Age/Grade is Flyweight For?

A: While football is commonly advertised by grade, and Flyweight is primarily for K to 1st grade athletes, TCFYL abides by a traditional birthday/grade assignment with a cutoff of 09/01 of every playing year. This means that if you held your kid back in school for a year due to a late birthday or other circumstance, his grade would not actually matter, as TCFYL will categorize him by his true birthday as of 09/01 of that playing year. The Flyweight Division is for children who will be 5 or 6 as of 09/01 of any playing year, with an exception made for 7-year-olds if under 50 lbs.

Q: Are there any weight restrictions or exceptions?

A: Yes, there are weight restrictions to ensure safe and proper play. 5-year-olds can play up to 80 lbs. as of the first week of the season, and 6-year-olds up to 75 lbs. 7-year-olds can play down in Flyweight if under 50 lbs. as of the first week. Players get an additional 0.5lb per week of the playing season.

Q: My athlete is large for his age group and over the maximum weights for Flyweight. Are there exceptions?

A: While there are exceptions for the older levels depending on age, since Flyweight is the lowest level, it is the only option for 5-year-old. If a 6- or 7-year-old is over the maximum weight, they would move up to the next level of play, Bantam.

Q: My second grader (7-year-old) is over 50 lbs. Can he stay at the Flyweight level?

A: He would have to move up to Bantam, however, this year we intend to field a developmental PAC-10 Bantam team primarily composed of 2nd graders, and so your son would be in good company!