

## WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS'

### SAFETY LIST FOR FOOTBALL PLAYERS

Football is a contact sport and injuries will occur. The coaches working in our program are well qualified, professional people. Fundamentals related to playing football will continually and repeatedly be emphasized on and off the field. The information contained within this list of rules and procedures is to inform the young men in our football program of the proper techniques to practice for maximum safety in the contact phase of the game.

#### **Tackling, Blocking and Running the Ball**

By the rule, the helmet is not to be used as a "ram." Initial contact is not to be made with the helmet. It is not possible to play the game safely or correctly without making contact with the helmet when properly blocking and tackling an opponent. Therefore, technique is most important to prevent of injuries.

Tackling and blocking techniques are basically the same. Contact is to be made above the waist but not initially with the helmet. The player should always be in a position of balance, knees bent, back straight, body slightly bent forward, HEAD UP, target area as near to the body as possible with the main contact being made with the shoulder.

Blocking and tackling by not putting the helmet as close to the body as possible could result in shoulder injury such as a separation or a pinched nerve in the neck area. The dangers of not following the proper techniques can be from minor to disabling to even death. The reason for following the safety rules in making contact with the upper body and helmet is that improper body alignment can put the spinal column in a vulnerable position for injury.

If the head is bent downward, the cervical (neck) vertebrae are in a bind and contact on the TOP OF THE HELMET could result in a dislocation, nerve damage, paralysis, or even death. If the back is not straight, the thoracic (mid back) and lumbar vertebra are also vulnerable to injury with similar results if contact again is made to the TOP OF THE HELMET. Each daily workout includes isometric-type exercises; the development of strength in the neck muscles is one of the best methods of preventing head injury and enabling an individual to hold his head up even after getting tired during a workout or contest.

#### **Basic Hitting (Contact) Position and Fundamental Technique**

If the knees are not bent, the chance of knee injury is greatly increased. Fundamentally a player should be in the proper hitting position at all times during live ball play and this point will be repeated continually during practice. The danger is anything from strained muscles to ankle injuries to serious knee injuries requiring surgery. The rules have made blocking below the waist (outside a two-yard by four-yard area next to the football) illegal. Cleats have been restricted to no more than ½ inch to further help in preventing knee injuries. A runner with the ball, however, may be tackled around the legs.

In tackling, the rules prohibit initial contact with the helmet or grabbing the facemask or edge of the helmet. These restrictions were placed in the rules because of serious injuries resulting from non-compliance to these safety precautions. Initial helmet contact could result in a bruise, dislocation, broken bone, head injury, internal injury, such as kidneys, spleen, bladder, etc. Grabbing the face mask or helmet edge could result in a neck injury, which could be anything from a muscle strain to a dislocation, nerve injury, spinal column damage causing paralysis or death.

The illegal play by participating athletes will not be tolerated and all players are repeatedly reminded of the dangers of unsportsmanlike acts.

**Fitting and Use of Equipment**

Shoulder pads, helmets, hip pads, pants including thigh pads and kneepads must have proper fitting and use.

Shoulder pads which are too small will leave the shoulder point vulnerable to bruises or separations; it could also be too tight in the neck area resulting in a possible pinched nerve. Shoulder pads which are too large will leave the neck area poorly protected and will slide on the shoulders making them vulnerable to bruises or separations.

Helmets must fit snugly at the contact points: front, back and top of head. The helmet must be safety “NOCSAE” branded, the chinstraps must be fastened, and the cheek pads must be of the proper thickness. On contact, too tight a helmet could result in a headache. Too loose a fit could result in headaches, a concussion, a face injury such as a broken nose or cheek bone, a blow to the back of the neck causing a neck injury, possibly quite serious such as paralysis or even death.

The report does not cover all potential injury possibilities in playing football, but is an attempt to make the players aware that fundamentals, coaching and proper fitting equipment is important to their safety and enjoyment in playing football in the Wake County Public School System.

The above information has been explained to me and I understand the list of rules and procedures. I also understand the necessity of using the proper techniques while participating in the football program.

Athlete Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_