

PYFFL Coaches Clinic

August 2026





PYFFL Philosophy & Program Overview

Our Philosophy

Pembroke Youth Flag Football (PYFFL) provides an inclusive environment for children to learn, compete and have fun in an easily accessible sport.

We value sportsmanship and teamwork while believing that both the wins and losses that come with competing offer children valuable opportunities to grow.

Program Overview

Teams & Divisions

74 teams in K-9th. 740 Players

Games & Playoffs

Each team plays 8 games and at least 1 playoff game - all teams make the playoffs.

Super Bowl Sunday

Tentatively scheduled for 11/08.



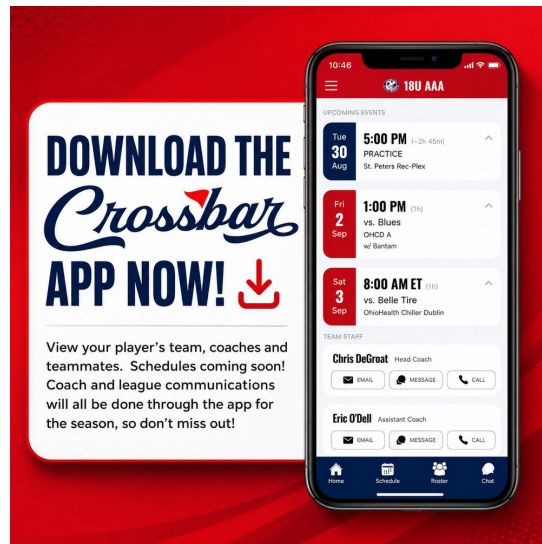
Crossbar

You must have the Crossbar app.

If you have not downloaded it yet, please do so now.

Key Features:

- Communicate with your team and other coaches
- Schedule and manage your team's practices
- Track player availability and RSVPs



Guidelines For Using Crossbar as a Coach

Set Up Your Profile

Make your contact information visible to your team. Having a profile photo is very helpful as well.

Communicate Regularly

Use the Crossbar Chat feature to communicate regularly with players and families throughout the season.

Schedule Practices in Advance

Give families plenty of notice when scheduling your weekly practice. All practices must be added to Crossbar at least seven days in advance.

Use Player-Only RSVP Settings

Make sure the RSVP feature is on and set to Players Only. Encourage families to keep their player's availability updated so you can plan accordingly.

Never Schedule Games in Crossbar

Coaches should not create or schedule games in Crossbar. This includes placeholders for makeup games, playoff games, or any other potential matchup. All games will be scheduled and entered by the league.



The Role of PYFFL Coaches

Teacher & Mentor

Teach players the fundamentals of flag football (throwing, catching, flag pulling, and positioning.) Focus on skill development, teamwork, and understanding the game. Provide constructive feedback to help each player grow.

Role Model

Your actions set the tone. Demonstrate respect for referees, opponents, and fellow coaches. Emphasize fair play, honesty, and integrity. Address mistakes calmly, showing players how to handle adversity.

Create A Positive Environment

Celebrate effort, not just results. Ensure every player feels included and valued. Use positive language and keep critiques constructive. Build team unity through encouragement and support.

Teamwork First

Teach players to compete with effort and enthusiasm. Keep practices engaging. Focus on improvement and teamwork rather than just the score. Celebrate small victories like a good pass or strong defensive effort.



Practices

1. Philosophy

- Effective practices are the key to player development and team success.
- A well-structured practice keeps kids engaged and builds skills.
- **Rule of Thumb:** If the kids are moving, learning, and having fun, it's successful!

2. Drill Flow

- Plan in advance with a clear flow: warm-ups, skill drills, plays, scrimmage.
- Keep drills short and active to maintain focus and involve everyone.
- Always emphasize effort, teamwork, and improvement over perfection.

3. Basic Practice Plan

- **Warm Up:** 5 Minutes
- **Flag Pulling:** 10 Minutes
- **Agility & Reaction:** 10 Mins
- **Offensive Stations:** 15 Mins
- **Run Plays:** 15 Minutes
- **Team Huddle:** 5 Minutes



What We Want To Teach: **FUNDAMENTALS**



Our primary goal as coaches should be to teach the fundamentals of flag football.

Players should develop the basic skills they need to throw, catch, snap, run with the ball, pull flags, and understand their responsibilities on the field.

Plays, formations, and strategy are important, but they should never come at the expense of proper instruction and skill development.



Plenty of Great Resources At Our Website!

[ABOUT](#)[LEAGUES](#)[SCHEDULE](#)[TEAMS](#)[RESOURCES](#)[DIVISIONS](#)[+ REGISTRATION](#)[COACHING APPLICATION](#)[PYFFL RULE BOOK](#)[SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD](#)[COACHING RESOURCES HUB](#)

COACHING RESOURCES HUB

The resources below are intended to provide PYFFL coaches with additional ideas, drills, practice plans and instructional tools to help them prepare for the season and support their players. With the exception of materials provided by NFL FLAG, these outside resources are not officially endorsed by PYFFL. However, many of our coaches have found them helpful when planning practices, teaching fundamentals and developing a positive flag football experience for their teams.

[NFLFLAG.COM](#)



Tips for Coaching Flag Football Offense

Core Offensive Fundamentals

Proper football grip

Throwing mechanics: Stance, arm motion, release and follow-through

Catching technique: watching it into the hands and securing the ball.

Snapping: Delivering consistent, accurate snaps to the quarterback

Handoffs: How to deliver and receive a handoff

Ball security: Properly carrying the ball and keeping it protected while running

Execution Tips

Understanding assignments and executing a play

Route running: Proper route, spacing and timing

Spacing the field and avoiding clustered routes

Moving without the ball

Quarterback footwork and decision-making



Coaching Tip: Stop Flag Guarding

What is Flag Guarding?

An illegal physical barrier to flag-pulling.

The Definition:

Using any part of the body or the ball to intentionally obstruct an opponent's access to the flags.

Common Offenses:

Slapping a defender's hand away, dipping the shoulder low to block access, or covering the flags with a jersey or the football itself.

The Penalty:

Results in a 5-yard penalty from the spot of the foul and a loss of down.

How to Coach Against It

Teach legal, dynamic ball carrier moves.

Keep Hands High:

Train players to keep their hands up and away from their waist. Emphasize "pumping the arms" while running to naturally avoid guarding.

Emphasize Legal Moves:

Coach players to use speed, directional cuts, and spins instead of their hands to evade defenders.

Drill "Hands-Free" Running:

Run practice drills where ball carriers must hold onto footballs in both hands to prevent instinctual hand-slapping.

Tips for Coaching Flag Football Defense

Core Defensive Fundamentals

Key physical principles to teach every defender.

Stay Low & Balanced: Keep knees bent, weight distributed on the balls of the feet for quick change of direction.

Eyes on the Hips: Teach players to lock eyes on the ball-carrier's hips.

Two-Handed Pulls: Always reach with both hands and secure the flag before pulling straight down.

Aim for the Top: Players should practice pulling the tops of the flag rather than the bottom.

Execution Tips

Take Proper Angles: Never chase directly behind. Run to the spot where the ball-carrier is going to be.

Contain the Outside: Force the ball-carrier inward toward teammate help by keeping leverage on the outside shoulder.

Talk and Communicate: Call out "Pass" or "Run" and hand off zones instantly to eliminate coverage gaps.

Build Resilient Attitude: If a flag is missed, chase immediately. Many stops are made on the second or third attempt.



Game Day Coaching

Pre-Game

Have players arrive 30 minutes prior to start time. Handout belts, have players warm up, and review lineups.

Equal Playing Time & Opportunity

Rotate players through different positions and try to make sure that all players get a chance to touch the ball.

In Game Communication

Use short, concise instructions so that players can follow. Praise effort immediately. Offer quick tips after plays as needed.

Handling Disputes

Stay composed when needing to ask about a referee call. Redirect player frustration with encouragement and focus on the next play. Prioritize player safety and sportsmanship over winning.



Game Day Checklist

1. Arrival & Setup

- Arrive 30 minutes early.
- Welcome players and parents as they arrive.
- Distribute flag belts and assist players as needed.
- Have players warm up by doing some simple passing lines or simple drills.

2. Pre-Game Checks

- Line up players for referee equipment inspections.
- Verify tucked jerseys, mouthguards, and hips flags.
- Select two game captains for the coin toss.
- Confirm rotation and balance between active squads.

3. Game & Beyond

- Execute equal playing time and rotation plans.
- Keep coaching instructions short and positive.
- Praise athletic effort immediately from the sideline.
- Gather for a quick post-game huddle and return belts.



Game Play

Team Structure

5v5 Format

We play 5v5 flag football with quick, high-energy possessions.

10-Player Rosters

Teams are made up of 10 players total.

Two Active Squads

You break your main team roster into two distinct "squads" of five. Every player plays the entire game. Players play one half on offense, and one on defense. (Unless they are an Ironman)

Squad Balancing

You want your squads to be balanced. It is in the best interest of your team to spread out your more skilled players between the two squads.

OFFENSE vs DEFENSE

QUARTERBACK

This player receives the snap from the center and initiates the play either through a handoff or pass. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball across the line of scrimmage without first handing the ball off to a teammate and then receiving a second handoff back or receiving a pass.

Q

CENTER

This player's main responsibility is to snap the ball to begin the play, a critical skill at all levels of football. Once the center has snapped the football to the QB – either directly or from a pistol or shotgun formation – they are eligible to go out for a pass and catch the ball.

C

WIDE RECEIVER/BACK

Any player who does not initiate the snap nor receive the snap is considered an eligible receiver/back and can either receive a handoff or catch a pass.

WR

WR

WR

DB

DB

SAFETY

The Safety is the defensive QB, especially in flag football. Their role is to lead the defensive team and to cover anyone who get loose. If a wide receiver is getting open deep, he/she covers and helps out.

S

S

RUSHER

Any player who rushes the quarterback must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage at the snap. For fields that do not include yard lines, officials will mark this seven-yard zone before every play.

R

DEFENSIVE BACK

The defensive backs play the short pass first and the run to the outside. Opposite to how (S) Safeties play (i.e. pass first then run), the defensive backs guard against the run first then pass.





Please Read the PYFFL Rulebook

Why It Is Essential

Ensures all coaches are aligned on gameplay and player rules.

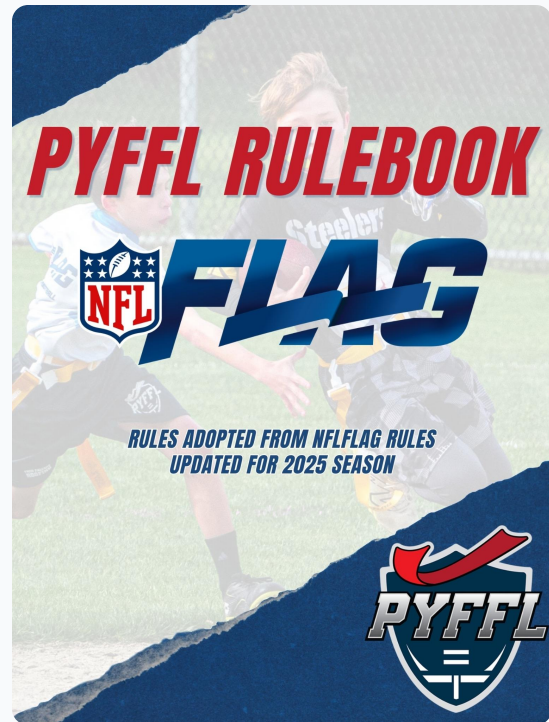
Prevents game-day confusion and supports fair competition.

Helps coaches teach the proper rules to players who are learning the sport of flag football for the first time.

Access & Reading

Please read the rulebook cover to cover to prepare for the season.

Always available at PembrokeFlagFootball.com





The Rule of Three Scores

1. 3-Score Limit

Across all divisions, players cannot score more than 3 times on offense..

This limit includes both touchdowns and PATs (Points After Touchdowns).

2. Defense Exception

Defensive touchdowns do not count towards a player's score maximum.

Players can continue to play hard on defense without risking eligibility.

3. Carrier Eligibility

Once a player has maxed out on scores, they are no longer an eligible ball carrier.

They are prohibited from advancing the ball further on offense.



PYFFL Specific Rules: Ironman

1. Standard (10 Players)

- Every player must play at least one full half on offense and one on defense.
- Two equal groups of 5 are created before kickoff.
- Once established, players cannot switch groups during the game.

2. Ironman (8-9 Players)

- **9 Players:** One Ironman plays both ways per half. Requires 2 different Ironmen per game.
- **8 Players:** Two Ironmen play both ways per half. Requires 4 different Ironmen per game.
- No player may serve as Ironman in both halves of the same game.

3. Short Rosters (<8)

- **7 or 6 Players:** Ironman rule is suspended. Players play both ways as needed.
- Every player must play at least 3 series on each side of the ball.
- **5 Players:** All play every play. Teams get one extra timeout per half.



Equipment Overview & Tips

1. League Equipment

- Players are provided all equipment they need from the league.
- Extra mouthguards are for sale at the snack shack for the season. Someone will inevitably lose a mouthguard during the season!

2. Belt Fitting

- At the first practice you will need to ask parents to help fit players for their belts.
- Use duct tape, scissors, and sharpies to tape off the belts and label them.

3. Coach's Tip

- **Coaches should hold onto player belts for the entire season!**
- The two most important pieces of equipment are mouthguards and flag belts.
- Please remind parents that on game day players **MUST** wear their PYFFL issued shorts!

Designing Plays

Spacing & Timing

Create simple, structured strategies that help players know their roles, focusing on spacing and quick decisions.

Balanced Play

Design opportunities for all players to be involved by balancing running and passing options.

Clear Routes

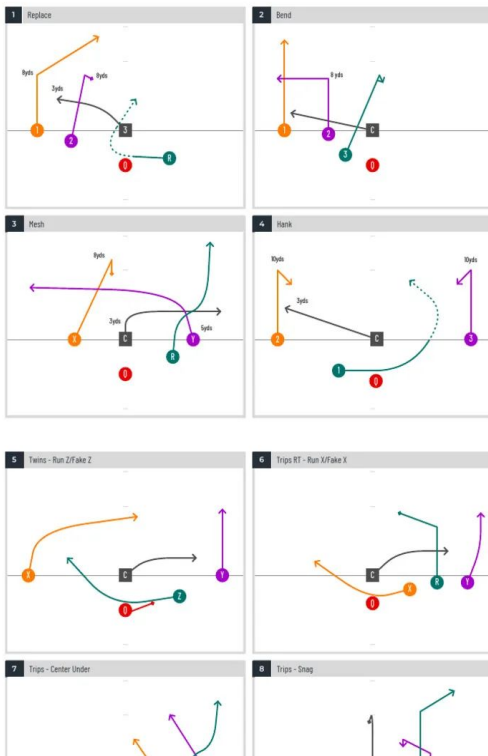
Keep plays easy to remember with clear, simple routes like slants, outs, and go routes.

Play Variety

Build a versatile playbook that includes a strong combination of run and pass plays.



Designing Plays: Practice Execution



Walkthrough Setup

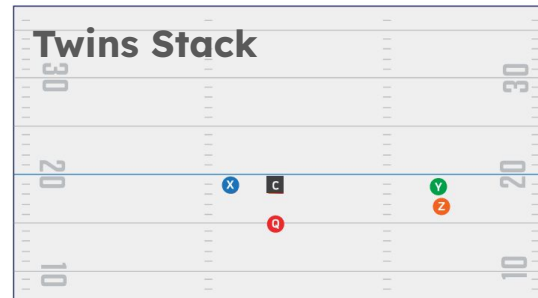
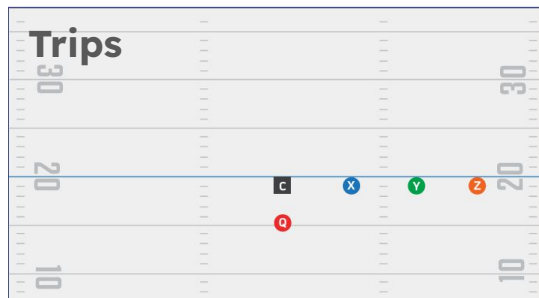
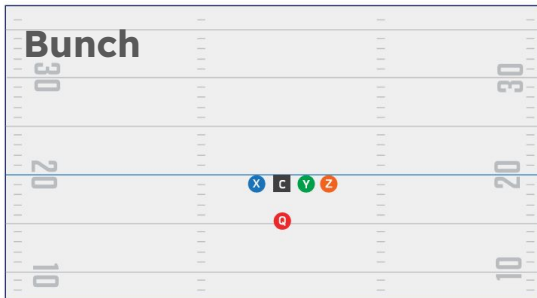
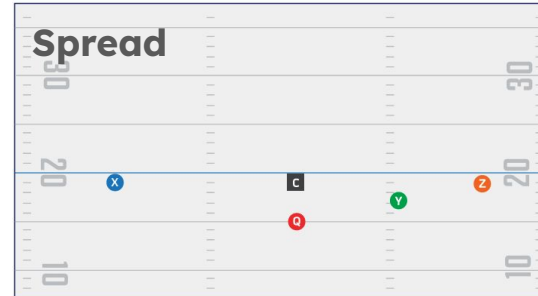
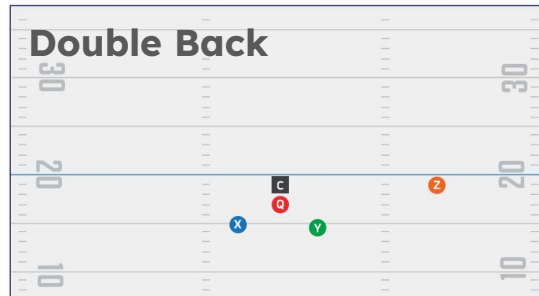
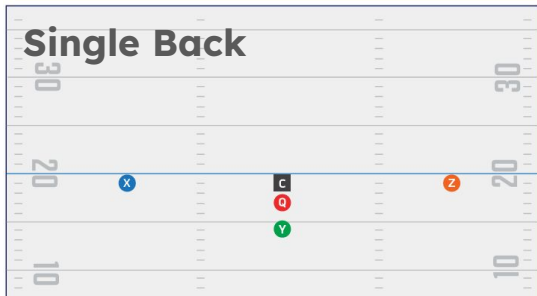
Run plays at half-speed with no defense first. Focus entirely on alignment, steps, and visual markers so every player visualizes their assignment perfectly before live competition.

The Playbook Scaffold

Limit your active playbook to ??? **what is the perfect number core plays Marc Bertrand?..** Use identical initial pre-snap formations to disguise whether the final execution is a run, handoff, or deep pass.



From NFL Flag: Offensive Formations



Designing Plays: Tips for Younger Kids

Keep It Ultra-Simple

Younger players struggle with complex spatial assignments. Stick to basic, straight-line principles.

Limit your playbook to 3-4 core concepts to prevent alignment confusion and boost player confidence.

Colors Are Your Friend!

Using a color system for plays in an excellent way to have the players learn their positions.

Clear Visual Markers

Use explicit physical keys on the field to guide execution. Tell players to run "to the orange cone" or "parallel to the sideline."

Visual goals help younger minds process spatial routes faster than abstract drawing lines on a slate.



Designing Plays: Tips for Older Kids

Introduce Spatial Concepts

Older players can comprehend complex field spacing and zone exploitation.

Incorporate route combinations like floods, hi-lo concepts, and decoy routes to stretch defenses vertically and horizontally.

Incorporate Progression

Teach quarterbacks to read defensive keys rather than locking onto one target.

Design plays with clear primary, secondary, and safety check-down targets based on defender positioning post-snap.

Add Option Decision Play

Leverage their advanced coordination with run-pass options (RPOs) and handoff decisions.

Give skilled players localized autonomy to make split-second adjustments based on defensive alignment pre-snap.



Building a Supportive & Inclusive Environment

Equal Opportunity

Ensure Every Kid Plays

In PYFFL, success is measured by participation and growth, not just the scoreboard.

Rotate positions during practices and games so every player experiences running, catching, and defending, regardless of their current skill level.

Positive Reinforcement

Celebrate Effort Over Outcome

Shifting focus from mistakes to constructive feedback keeps players motivated.

Praise hustle, teamwork, and sportsmanship. Encourage peers to cheer for one another, establishing a safe space where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities.

Zero-Tolerance Bullying

Active sideline Management

A supportive environment requires proactive protection from negative behavior.

Address any teasing, exclusion, or negative self-talk immediately. Set clear team standards of respect and model them on the sideline for players and parents alike.



Managing Gameday Frustrations

For Coaches

Lead by Example

Your sideline behavior sets the tone for players and parents alike.

- Focus on coaching, not officiating
- Keep communication constructive and positive
- Address parent outbursts immediately

For Players

Control the Controllables

Help young athletes manage mistakes and stay motivated on the field.

- Praise great effort over the outcome
- Teach the "Next Play" focus mentality
- Encourage peer-to-peer support

De-escalation Steps

The Cool-Down Routine

When tensions rise, use this structured sequence to restore focus:

1. Take a 2-second sideline breath
2. Reframe the challenge positively





OUT OF MY CONTROL

PLAYER/PARENT COMMITMENT

CROWD NOISE

WEATHER

IN MY CONTROL

LUCK

WORDS

ATTITUDE

INJURIES

PREGAME COMMUNICATION

THE FINAL RESULT

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

OPPONENTS SKILL LEVEL

IN GAME ADJUSTMENTS

RESPONSE TO ADVERSITY

CALLS FROM OFFICIALS

AFTER GAME HUDDLE

BROKEN PLAYS



The 7 Things You Can't Say to a PYFFL Referee

By: Marc Bertrand, October 2025



“He/She stepped out of bounds!”

Or pointing to a spot on the sideline like you’ve been deputized to help. The ref saw it, or didn’t — either way, it’s not your call.

“Flag guarding!!!”

Usually shouted before the flag has even been pulled. Let the officials make the call; it’s not a group decision.

“I guess we’re playing tackle now!”

Always said with the perfect mix of sarcasm and frustration. The only problem is, it’s also the fastest way to get the other team’s parents yelling the same thing.



“Seven seconds!!”

Whether it’s shouted from the sideline, mimicked with a hand count, or counted out loud, it crosses the line into officiating from the sideline. That’s not acceptable behavior for a PYFFL coach.

“Call it both ways!”

The universal classic. Every coach in America thinks this is the great equalizer. It’s not.

We’ve all been there. The game is close, the adrenaline is going, and you’re convinced the ref just missed one right in front of you. But the only way for PYFFL to be great is by having our coaches set the right tone. When we keep our cool, our players and parents follow our lead.

If you’re yelling one of these things from the sideline, you are not meeting league standards. It will be grounds for a warning the first time it happens, and ejection the second. Nobody involved wants that to happen.

“Guess we’re making it up as we go!”

This one is the quickest way to offend an official. You might as well be telling them they don’t know the rules or how to do their job.

“That’s a terrible call!”

Straightforward criticism never helps. It’s still criticism, and it sets a tone we don’t want anywhere near our sidelines.