

**AVON GROVE WILDCATS**

**PARENT/PLAYER HANDBOOK**

**FOOTBALL**

**2023**

## Program Goals

The Avon Grove Wildcats Football Program is committed to developing confident, hardworking, disciplined scholar athletes who value community, and team.

A tradition of excellence is being established for Avon Grove Wildcats football. The Avon Grove Wildcats have aligned with the Avon Grove Middle School and High School in order to create a seamless transition between programs. Our program’s goal is to field the top football teams in the Independent Youth Football League (IYFL) at each level of competition: Flag, 7U, 9U, 11U and 13U.

The primary goal is to provide an enjoyable and competitive football experience for youths who voluntarily choose to participate. The football program is designed to ensure that each player will grow physically, mentally and socially. An emphasis will be placed on building character, working hard, playing the game well and having fun. It is the coaching staffs’ goal that each Avon Grove Wildcats football player will learn – RESPONSIBILITY, COOPERATION, SELFLESSNESS, RELIABILITY, COMMITMENT, WORK ETHIC, LOYALTY and ACCOUNTABILITY.

## Fundamentals of Good Sportsmanship:

1. Show respect for the opponent at all times
2. Show respect for the officials
3. Know, understand, and uphold the rules of the game
4. Maintain self-control at all times
5. Recognize and appreciate skill in performance regardless of affiliation
6. Maintain a positive attitude

For an athlete to join the Avon Grove Wildcats football program, he or she must first commit to proper and appropriate behavior on and off the field, by exhibiting a sense of pride, loyalty and respect for his or her team, school, family, and community.

## Team Placement

For the purpose of this handbook we will further define the levels of competition into two categories – Competition and Developmental.

**Competition** – The competition team consists of the players who exhibit an appropriate level of football understanding for that age group. Players are evaluated on: Football IQ, Agility, Fundamentals, Maturity, and Team Focus. The competition team represents the community and program, against other IYFL participants, and competes for division and league championships. Opportunities exist for IYFL League Champions to advance to AYF Regional and National Championship games, at the following tackle levels: 9U, 11U and 13U.

**Developmental** – The developmental program is intended to instruct players that are not currently ready to play at the competition level. The main emphasis of this program will be to learn and gain playing experience. The developmental level is an instructional level and is not intended to be an alternative to Competition. In the event that there are not enough players to fill a complete developmental team the players will play on the competition team. While the developmental teams will work hard to win games, **the emphasis is on player development.**

Avon Grove’s only responsibility to the IYFL is to field a Competition team to participate in the IYF league. Developmental teams are viewed as an added benefit organized by the IYFL in order to allow kids to play and learn. It is the **Competition Head Coach’s** responsibility to ensure the competition team has the right kids in order to compete at the highest levels. The **Head Coaches** are the sole deciders of who plays at which level. **Neither players, nor parents**, may request a player move to accommodate a coach or player position preference. Coaching staffs and their decisions are final, absent extraordinary circumstances. If an issue persists, parents will have their programs fees refunded on a prorated basis, and their player will not be able to participate.

## Playing Time Policy

The Wildcat Program’s overarching goal is player development, creating a lifelong love of the game and a desire to continue playing. The board of directors recognizes the need to clarify the organizations playing time policy by level in order to ensure coaches, players, and parents have the appropriate expectation.

**Flag**

The flag program is a development program designed to energize players for the game and create basic fundamentals that will translate to the tackle program. In order to ensure the players have an enjoyable, and rewarding experience, it is the expectation of the Wildcats Program that all kids receive as close to equal playing time as possible and players experience multiple positions on the field. The goal of the Flag program is to teach basic fundamentals.

**Developmental**

The intent of the developmental team is to develop player skill and prepare them for future opportunities to play at the competition level. The goal is to field competitive teams that facilitate learning and player respect for the game. As such, the expectation of the program at the developmental level is that each player would experience equal playing time. However, as this is a tackle football program, and player safety is of the utmost importance, it is up to the head coach to make playing time adjustments to ensure a player is not put in a position where they would injure themselves, or that their skill level would put another player in a position to be injured. The developmental team head coach should talk to each parent when a playing time adjustment would be required. Every opportunity should be made to give the player an opportunity to develop and play in the game. Additionally, the developmental head coach should look for opportunities to rotate player positions in order to facilitate learning and allow players to experience other facets of the game.

Playing time is also tied to the attendance policy. Regardless of skill level any violation of the attendance policy will impact playing time.

**Competition**

The competition level represents the Avon Grove Wildcats program in the IYFL. As such, equal playing time should not be expected for competition players. It is up to the head coach to put the best possible team on the field to represent the program and remain competitive. However, player development and enjoyment are equally as important as winning. All competition players should receive “meaningful playing time” as part of the team. “Meaningful playing time” is defined as an 8 play minimum, not including special teams. Players that fall in the 8 play minimum, will also get on the field through at least one special teams unit (ie Kick Off, Kick Off Return, etc). Competition coaches must take this into consideration when selecting their team during the evaluation period. The head coach will also brief the players’ parents regarding playing time ahead of the season in order to ensure there will be no false expectations. Play critiquing by parents will not be tolerated, as it is the head coach's decision how the players are utilized in order to ensure that Avon Grove has the most competitive team on the field as possible.

Lastly, on a week-to-week basis, players from the developmental team can be selected to suit up for the competition team, in addition to their developmental team. This is based on the competition team’s head coach discretion. Players from the developmental team will not fall into the 8 play minimum requirement, as they would get adequate playing time from their developmental team during that week.

## Communication

Communication is very important! When necessary, coaches will communicate with parents via email and text messaging. The designated Team Parent will also communicate with the parents regarding events, fundraising and changes in practice times/location, etc. Such information can also be found on the Avon Grove Wildcats website, facebook page, Instagram account and through emails from the organization. If a player has concerns or an issue with any aspect of the football program, parents/guardians should discuss all issues with your player first, then contact the head coach if necessary. Head coaches have an open door policy but we want to make sure the player and parents/guardians have discussed the issue first before contacting the head coach.

## No player or parent should approach coaches immediately before, during, or after a GAME to discuss an issue, unless the issue is an injury. Parents should discuss any issue with their son or daughter before contacting a coach or the Athletic Director. After talking to your son or daughter, parents may request, via email or telephone, to speak with the head coach. If the issues have not been resolved, the Athletic Director will be consulted. If the issues are still not resolved, the President of the Board of Directors will be consulted.

Appropriate Concerns to Discuss with Coaches:

* Ways to help your player improve
* Concerns about your player’s behavior
* Injuries
* Your player’s well being

Issues Not Appropriate to Discuss with Coaches:

* Team strategy
* Play calling
* Other players

## Attendance & Punctuality

Football is a team sport that requires individuals to work together for the good of the whole. In order to develop team cohesiveness, it is important to practice as a team and learn to work together. The only way to achieve this goal is through practice. Understandably situations will arise when players will miss practice. Additionally in the interest of fairness to the players who attend practice during the week, absences must be accounted for in game playing time. Thus, the AGW board of directors has adopted the following attendance policy:

* 1. To be in good standing, the player must attend all practice and game activities unless he/she is granted an excused absence.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Excused | Unexcused |
| * Illness or Injury * School activity * School work requiring extra focus or time * Church event * Community function * Family emergency | * Additional Sport (ie: fall baseball) * Vacation – we recognize the value of family time, however during the season absences for vacation impact the entire team. If practice schedules change over a pre-planned activity the vacation would be considered excused. * Additional activity |

* 1. The following standards will be applied for in season practice absences:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Number of Absences | Excused | Unexcused |
| 1 x Practice during the week | No impact | Player will sit out for one quarter |
| 2 x Practices during the week | No Impact | Player will sit out for two quarters |
| 3 x Practices during the week | Player will sit out for that week’s game | Player will sit out for that week’s game |

* 1. Players may be required to sit out of a game or partial game for disciplinary actions, but the parents of the player must be made aware of this no later than the night before the game.

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## Injuries and Team Participation

A player who is injured during the course of a practice or game will be evaluated by medical personnel designated by the organization’s Medical Directors. If the injury is serious enough to preclude the player’s participation in subsequent practices or games, the player must consult his or her own physician and receive written clearance to play. The sufficiency of the written medical clearance will be left to the discretion of the organization’s Medical Directors.

## Sports Physical Form Policy

Complete and sign the parent section and have your doctor fill out and sign the physician section. The form will be valid for 12 months and must be valid through the remainder of the season (11/30). A player will not be allowed to participate in practices without the submission of a completed Sports Physical form.

## Equipment

Prior to the start of fall season practices, the Avon Grove Wildcats will issue each player a helmet and shoulder pads to borrow. Each player MUST return the issued equipment to the equipment manager at a date and location specified by the organization. Failure to return equipment will result in your equipment deposit being forfeited.

## Helmet Policy

Note that although the Avon Grove Wildcats provides all players with quality helmets, some families still choose to purchase their own helmets. This is permitted by the organization under 2 conditions:

1. The color should match the color of the Wildcats helmet which is “Maroon”. *.*
2. The helmet needs to be certified as reconditioned every other year. This is a USA Football, IYFL and Insurance requirement. The helmet will need to have a valid reconditioning sticker on it.

## Dual Enrollment Policy

Avon Grove Middle School and the Avon Grove Wildcats are offering players who are eligible to play for both the Middle School and the Wildcats, the opportunity to do both without having to participate in double the practices. The hope is that this will allow kids to freely participate in both organizations. It will also give kids the opportunity for more playing time while enhancing the skill level across both organizations—so we think it will be a win-win-win!

Players who play both will attend all of the practices for the Middle School Team. They will then attend two full Wildcats practices.

## General Expectations for Players

* All players must demonstrate self-discipline on the practice and game fields.
* Any player who demonstrates disrespect or insubordination towards a teammate, coach, official, team parent, or medical personnel will be held accountable for his or her behavior.
* Players must always be properly dressed in the “uniform of the day” as designated by the head coach.
* Players will be completely dressed in proper uniform before entering the practice or game field. Football helmets will be worn **at all times.** For other than a water break, a player must ask permission of a coach to remove his helmet while on the practice field. A player must **never** sit on his helmet.
* A player’s shirttail must always be tucked in during games.

## Players are not permitted to alter their practice or game uniforms in any way with the exception of wearing organization sanctioned pink accouterments in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month or patriotic accouterments.

### CODE OF CONDUCT - Parent/Guardian

The Avon Grove Wildcats organization expects all parents/guardians and players to represent the organization properly by following our “Code of Conduct”. This “Code” must be adhered to while at any Avon Grove Wildcats or IYFL sanctioned event.

**PARENT/GUARDIAN CODE OF CONDUCT**

* Abusive, violent or sexual contact with any child, staff member, fan, referee or any participating person will result in immediate dismissal.
* Cursing or abusive, demeaning or intimidating language in the presence of children, staff members, fans, referees or any participating person is prohibited and will not be tolerated.
* Language that is considered offensive from a racial, ethnic, religious or gender perspective is prohibited and will not be tolerated.
* Sexual or vulgar conduct or language is prohibited and will not be tolerated.
* Sexual harassment is prohibited and will not be tolerated.
* Drinking alcoholic beverages, using illegal substances or coming to any Avon Grove Wildcats or IYFL sanctioned event intoxicated or under the influence of an illegal substance is grounds for immediate dismissal.
* The act of gambling, betting or placing a bet is prohibited and will not be tolerated.
* The use of group email or social media to express frustration with a coach, player, parent, or the organization is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Remember, Coaches are volunteers giving up their personal time, away from their family, in order to invest in the growth of your child.
* Play critiquing or becoming argumentative with a coach, referee or official is prohibited and may result in removal from the site and limits to future participation.
* IYFL sportsmanlike conduct expressly states that ANY PERSON who strikes or threatens ANY game official, league official, coach, player, parent or fan will be immediately removed from the site and will be requested to take their child(ren) involved in the organization. Neither the adult nor the child will be eligible to participate in the IYFL henceforth.

If there is a violation of the code of conduct **the board reserves the right to remove a player & parent from the team** and funds will be refunded at a prorated basis.

## By affixing my signature below, I attest that I have read and understood the Avon Grove Wildcats Parent/Player Handbook and the Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct.

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Parent/Guardian Name (Print)

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Parent/Guardian Signature Date

### CODE OF CONDUCT - Player

The Avon Grove Wildcats organization expects all parents/guardians and players to represent the organization properly by following our “Code of Conduct”. This “Code” must be adhered to while at any Avon Grove Wildcats or IFYL sanctioned event.

**PLAYER CODE OF CONDUCT**

* I will demonstrate good sportsmanship and respect for other players, coaches, officials, and parents.
* I will do my best to listen and learn from my coaches.
* I will attend every practice and game that I can and will notify my coach if I cannot.
* I understand that an unexcused absence may result in discipline or reduced playing time.
* I will do my best in school and understand that school will always come before sports.
* I will not use profanity or taunt others.
* I will never purposely engage in an act to physically hurt another.
* I will do my best to practice and play the game of football within the rules.
* I will be a good teammate that will show support and never criticize others.

If there is a violation of the code of conduct **the board reserves the right to remove a player & parent from the team** and funds will be refunded at a prorated basis.

## By affixing my signature below, I attest that I have read and understood the Avon Grove Wildcats Player Code of Conduct.

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Player Name (Print)

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Player Signature Date

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## By affixing my signature below, I attest that I have discussed the contents of the Avon Grove Wildcats Parent/Player Handbook and the Player Code of Conduct with my player:

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Parent/Guardian Signature Date