



Fitzgerald High School  
Department of Athletics  
601 W. Cypress St. Fitzgerald, GA. 31750

## ***FOOTBALL CAUTIONARY STATEMENT***

**Football is a contact sport and injuries will occur. The coaches in our program are well qualified professionals. Fundamentals related to playing football will continually be emphasized on and off the field. The information contained within this list of procedures and rules is to inform the players and their families of the proper techniques to practice for maximum safety in the contact phase of the game of football.**

### **PRE-SEASON PARTICIPATION**

Because football is a contact sport, athletes must condition to prepare for the season. This includes strength training as well as aerobic training. It is also important that athletes continue to strength train during the season to further assist in the prevention of injuries.

### **TACKLING, BLOCKING AND RUNNING THE BALL**

By rule the helmet is not to be used as a "ram". Initial contact is not to be made with the helmet. It is NOT permissible to play the game safely or correctly without making some contact with the helmet. This usually occurs when properly blocking and tackling. Therefore, technique is important in the prevention of injuries.

Tackling and blocking techniques are similar. 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 forward, head up and in a position near to the opponent as possible. Main contact should be made with the shoulder. Not placing the helmet as close to the body as possible could result in shoulder injury during a block or tackle. The dangers of not using proper technique could include injury, paralysis and/or death. The reason for following safety rules in making contact with the upper body and helmet is that proper body alignment can put the spinal column in a vulnerable position for injury.

If the head is bent downward, the cervical (neck) vertebrae are vulnerable and contact on the TOP OF THE HELMET could result in dislocation, nerve damage, paralysis and/or death. If the back is not straight, the vertebrae of the back are also vulnerable to serious injury if contact is made with the TOP OF THE HELMET. The development of strength in the neck muscles is one of the best methods to prevent head and neck injury.

### **BASIC HITTING (CONTACT) POSITION AND FUNDAMENTAL TECHNIQUE**

If the knees are not bent, the chance of knee injury is increased. A player should be in the fundamental hitting position at all times during live ball play and practice. The rules have made blocking below the waist illegal, except in the area called the free blocking zone. The length of cleat has also been restricted to help prevent injury. In tackling, the rules prohibit initial contact with the helmet or grabbing the facemask. Initial helmet contact can result in injury to both parties. Grabbing the facemask can result in serious neck injury. Illegal and/or dangerous play by athletes will not be tolerated. Players are reminded constantly about fair and safe methods of play on the football field.

### **FITTING AND USE OF EQUIPMENT**

Shoulder pads, helmets, hip pads, pants with thigh and knee pads should be properly fitted and worn. Wear all protective pads, braces and undergarments for all practices and games. Shoulder pads that are too small or too large can produce injury to soft tissue in the neck, shoulder and arm areas.

Helmets must fit snugly at all contact points. The helmet must have a "NOCSAE" seal at all times. The chinstrap must be fastened and the cheek pads must be the proper thickness. On contact, a helmet that is too tight can produce headaches. A helmet worn too loosely can assist in producing concussion, face injury or broken facial bones. A blow to the head or neck can also be heightened by a loose fitting helmet.

### **PREPARATION OF PRACTICE OR GAMES**

1. Wear all protective equipment (including mouth guard) to every practice and game.
2. Make sure all straps and laces are inspected and secured every day.
3. Wear all appropriate outer and under garments for every game and/or practice.
4. Players should drink at least 4-6 glasses of water a day (more during extreme heat).
5. Players with visual problems should wear safety glasses.
6. Players needed protective tape or padding should arrive early to our training room.
7. All jewelry should be removed before leaving the locker room for a game or practice.
8. Players with seizures, cardiac problems, diabetes or other chronic problems must be cleared by a physician before participation in any football related activities.

### **IN THE LOCKER ROOM**

1. Be alert for slippery floors.
2. Be alert for changes in floor texture and elevated floor levels.
3. Keep floors free of litter and debris. Keep personal belongings in lockers.
4. Lock your locker every time you leave the area.
5. Keep soap and shampoo in the shower and drying area.
6. No horseplay, roughhousing, wrestling hazing or instantiations at any time.
7. Do not wear football cleats in the school building or gymnasium.

### **MOVEMENT TO THE PRACTICE/GAME FIELD OR TRAVEL TO CONTEST SITE**

#### **Be alert to:**

1. Goalpost
2. Blocking Sleds
3. Blocking Pads and/or dummies
4. Kicking and/or Kick return drills
5. Passing and/or Receiving drills
6. Agility, sprinting or other fast action drills.
7. No horseplay, roughhousing, wrestling hazing or instantiations at any time

### **CAUTIONS SPECIFIC TO THE GAME OF FOOTBALL**

#### **1. THE HEAD AND HELMET**

- A. Tackle or block with the shoulder pads. Never use the helmet to strike an opponent.
- B. Keep the chin and eyes up when blocking, tackling or running the football.
- C. Lowering the head/helmet jeopardizes the neck, back and spinal cord.

#### **2. BLOCKING AND DEFENSIVE CONTACT**

- A. The forearm striking surface should work with the shoulder and trunk extension.
- B. DO NOT wind up to accelerate the forearm separately.
- C. Block from the front or the side (with head in front) and above the waist.
- D. When pursuing a ball carrier, do not pile on when an opponent is down.
- E. Never grab the facemask of any other player.

**3. GENERAL**

- A. Get off the ground! Injuries are more common when you remain on the ground.
- B. When falling backward – tuck – leave no extreme ties extended during a fall.
- C. Participate fully in all strength training (especially the neck and back).

**4. HYDRATION**

- A. Drink water and other electrolyte fluids often before, during and after practice.
- B. Drink water and other electrolyte fluids often before, during and after games.
- C. Frequent water breaks will be scheduled during practices and games.

**5. WEIGHT ROOM**

- A. Supervised strength training activities will be employed at all times.
- B. Observe all weight room rules and regulations at all times.
- C. Never lift without proper supervision.

**EMERGENCIES**

Because of the nature of the game of football, some injuries will occur. All injuries must be called to the attention of the coach or trainer immediately. Most injuries will be minor and can be managed by the athletic trainer using basic first aid procedures. However, some injuries may need more intensive management and may require team members to:

1. Stop all practices, scrimmages or drills. DO NOT MOVE a severely injured victim.
2. Call the coach or trainer to manage the situation if not already on site.
3. Sit or kneel close to the victim and assist by:
  - a. Helping with the injured person when requested by the coach and/or trainer.
  - b. Calling for addition assistance when directed by the coach and/or trainer.
  - c. Bringing aid equipment and/or supplies when directed by the coach and/or trainer.
  - d. Keeping onlookers away from the injured player.
  - e. Directing rescue squad to the accident site when directed by the coach and/or trainer.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We hereby certify that we have read, understand and agree to adhere to the cautions, considerations and responsibilities required for participation on the Fitzgerald High School football team.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**WE ARE FITZGERALD!!!**