

Flag Football Tryout Secrets!

Picking the best team from your tryouts!

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Flag Football Tryout Secrets!

Flag football is generally played competitively between youths under the age of 13 – but can be played by anyone. It is the fast-paced and pass-oriented cousin of tackle football. Many of the skills are the same, but the rules of play – and contact – are quite a bit different.

This guide is not necessarily intended to help you weed out the players that you don't want on your team, but it will be very helpful for you to determine the strengths and weaknesses of some players on your team. Still, you can also use it to help you make the cuts you need to make on your flag football team.

Flag Football Tryout Secrets is designed to help take some of the gamble and guesswork out of selecting players for your team. I mean, you never really know how a player is going to turn out in the end, but you can make a good assumption based on what you see in your tryout camp.

To help you along in the selection of your team, I have provided the following resources:

- A strategy on choosing the right players for your team and the characteristics that make great team players.
- A **Selection Matrix** that is going to help you decide which players have to go and which players to keep. It also gives you an opportunity to provide players who are on the cusp, a little coaching direction to help them over the top.
- In the spirit of **Flag Football Drills and Practice Plans**, I have included a few different practice plans that you can use for your tryout camps.

Coaching isn't easy – especially at tryout time. You have to end up crushing a few dreams while making others come true. This plan is going to aid you in making the best overall decision for your team.

Best of Luck!

Building Your Team

OK, how many players? This is subjective in many cases, but I can offer you a few ideas on coming up with the numbers on your team.

- How many players came out to tryouts
- How many of each position will you carry, and keep in mind special teams players.
- How many players do you want on your roster that are 'projects' and you are building for future years?
- Is your team reliable in making practices and games?

Taking into account all of these questions and the fewer number of players on the field in flag football, I would suggest that a good sized team for football is between 15 and 20 players. If you have too many, then everybody is always splitting playing time (which no one really likes), and if you have too few players, then you risk not having enough to play. Players aren't always the most reliable, and other things like vacations, homework, and other occasions get in the way of flag football – leaving you short handed.

Further, even though this is flag football, there are more injuries in football than most other sports, so you may be nursing a few more injuries that have an effect on who can play in games and practices.

Documenting the tryouts

Many teams have attempted to equalize the playing field and have adopted a strict 'documentation' process for the coaches to follow. This attempts to ensure that everyone gets a fair shake on the field during the tryouts, and forces the coaches to be accountable. Why did you make the choice to cut one player and keep another?

It will all be down in the documentation. That's why I have come up with the **Selection Matrix** – it provides a great opportunity for you to evaluate the players that have come out for tryouts – and it provides you with the necessary documentation to make sure you are selecting the right players.

The Team Selection Matrix

I have put together a system that allows the coach to make fact-based decisions on their team. Here's how this system works:

- List all of the tryout players from top to bottom on the Matrix

- Decide on the 3 or 5 most important selection criteria for your team (I have examples below)
- Apply a different weighting to the selection criteria, based on what you think are the most important traits.
- Each criteria is scored between one and 10. These scores are multiplied by the weighting percentage.
- The scores after the weighting will be added together to come up with a final tally that is used to choose the team.

You may come up with different selection criteria on your own, but here are three areas you can start with:

- Player skills and positions
- Attitude and coachability
- Athleticism and potential

Players and their positions

Football is an interesting sport in that each position has different skills and physical attributes that each player needs to have. At earlier ages, this might not matter as much, but it definitely will have an effect later on in the football career.

In this case, we will go through the positions and provide our assessment of the most important skills and attributes of each position so you have a little bit of an idea of what might be a good player in a certain position.

Quarterbacks

What makes a good quarterback? So many different things. The game can hinge on the play of a quarterback, so the first thing I would look for is someone who has a good grasp of the game and is a competitor.

A good quarterback usually has a strong arm (or accurate one), decent mobility and they often have a good grasp of the game. They are the field generals for the offense and they lead the entire team, as the snap of the ball starts every play.

A good athlete can be taught the position of quarterback if they are keen on the game of football. Look for special athletes who have a head for the game, but may have never really played football before.

Running backs

Running isn't emphasized as much at the flag football level as it is in the tackle football game. Still, a good running back can provide an excellent option at receiver and still help you gain valuable yards on the ground.

The best running backs also should have a good head for the game. They should understand the flow of blocks and how each play will develop. You will find that some players have this natural ability and they will excel at it more than others.

Receivers (including Tight End)

Good hands are key here – I think the first and most important element of a receiver. After all, they are **receivers** and they need to catch the ball in order for things a play to work. That is why we believe the first and foremost skill for is catching.

Speed is another important element, as is agility. But, in my opinion, if you aren't able to catch the ball when it is thrown to you, then the speed and the agility don't matter anyway. Size can also be an advantage, especially if you run the ball a lot – they can make excellent outside blockers with size.

Offensive linemen

Good, quick blockers are key here, and since power and moving people off the line isn't as important as good position, you might not need the big beefy players that you would need in tackle football.

In flag football, quickness and the ability to wall off defenders is an excellent trait.

Defensive linemen

Defensive linemen need to have a mean streak. Now, I might find it hard to locate a 10-year-old with a real mean streak, so let's call it a nose for the ball. Defensive lineman should be able to sniff out the ball and do everything they can to make a play on it. They need to be able to do this play in and play out and not stop. One lost effort can mean that the offense gets a big play.

In flag football, quickness and the ability to shed blocks and read the play is more important than size. I would look for those players with a good combination of size and speed to play this position.

Linebackers

These players should have a good combination of size, speed, and football intelligence. They have to pull flags inside, and they need to have the speed to move outside to make flag pulls, and they also have to have the intelligence to drop back, read the quarterback and then make a play.

But, my first pick of skills for a linebacker would be solid ability to grab the flags. This is crucial for the linebacker. They make the majority of defensive stops, and they are relied upon to come up with big plays time and time again.

Secondary (Corners and safeties)

Speed is probably the most important element for these players, along with the ability to read the play and to make a play on the ball. Aside from the linebackers, these players will make the most flag pulls on your team

Defensive backs also need to be disciplined enough to stay in their zone, and also should work to stay with receivers in man-to-man coverage. Further, the defensive backs need to be able to read whether the play is going to actually be a pass or whether they need to provide run support.

Safeties should be some of the smarter players on your defense, as they need to read the quarterback and where the play is headed. They are the last line of defense on the field and they need to know what is going on.

Note: In my selection Matrix, I have weighted players and skills as 60%

Attitude and coachability

If I am the coach this is one area that I place a great deal of importance on. While you can have a player with average skill and a great attitude – and they can improve their skills with practice, the player with good skill and a bad attitude is hard to change. That's why I might lean towards players with good attitudes.

A good attitude sets an example for the rest of the players on the team. The best players usually have the best attitudes. It is that simple.

Since football is a team sport, everyone needs to be working together when they are on the field. If you have a few players who think they are above the team, or they don't need to put out the same effort as other players on the team, they can affect an entire lineup.

You can select players who have a questionable attitude in the hopes that the others with a good attitude will sway them. You can also keep a close eye on these players so that they don't become a distraction to the other players. A big attitude problem isn't something I would take on my team.

The players with good attitudes are great motivators for the players that do have the better skills and they can be valuable in pushing those players to greater heights.

When I am putting together my roster and I have the final positions to fill, I fill it based on attitude over skill every time. Attitude and coachability get a **30%** on my Selection Matrix.

Athleticism and potential

This can be hard for some coaches to gauge, but I think it is important. All you have to do is think of the player that can throw the ball 50 yards but can't hit the broad side of a barn. Or, you might have a player that has unreal speed and quickness but can't throw or catch the ball. Each of these players has his or her own potential and you have to decide if you can tap into it.

Athleticism is an important tool in determining the quality of a player. Some players have skill, but very little overall athleticism. You are going to have to do a balancing act – in my experience, there is more potential in players with excellent athleticism and lower skills than with skill and little athleticism.

Potential is a funny thing. But, identifying it can be a gold mine for a coach. Uncovered talent is all over the place, but some players need a little more coaching than others.

Every coach wants to find that diamond in the rough – so-to-speak. Especially if you are in a system that is eventually providing players to the high school tackle football team. So, put some stock in potential and see if you can cultivate a new player or two every year.

I place **10%** on athleticism and potential in the selection criteria.

Making your selections

Well, after the three main areas that we have talked about, you could add some more of your own to make the process more specific. But, this will get you started.

Now, following is an example of how the **Selection Matrix** works. You may alter it and adjust it, but I find that this works for me. I have included one sample matrix, and then a blank matrix that you can use for your next try out.

Note: The key to making the **Selection Matrix** work is if you are honest about a player's skills. Don't count anyone out unless they are really not up to par in the three skill areas. Some players may surprise you – others may not. But they all deserve the same chance. **You do want the best team, don't you?**

Player Name	Pos.	Positional skill score 1 to 10	Positional skill weighted (x60%)	Attitude Coachable 1 to 10	A and C weighted (x30%0	Athleticism and Potential 1 to 10	A and P weighted (x10%)	Total Score (all weighted scores)	Decision	Comments
Marco Ryan	OL	6	3.6	8	2.4	3	.3	6.3	Yes	Great attitude, can work on being in shape
Jay Been	RB	4	2.4	5	1.5	8	.8	4.7	No	Great outside runner but no inside skills
Dustin Thomas	LB	9	5.4	4	1.2	6	.6	7.2	Yes	We can work on his attitude
Chuck Deep	WR	3	1.8	9	2.7	9	.9	5.4		Diamond in the rough?
Ryan Scott	QB	8	4.8	8	2.4	6	.6	7.8	Yes	Could be our star player
Juan Cruz	DT	5	3.0	6	1.8	6	.6	5.4	Yes	Great speed and size
Charlie Grey	TE	9	5.4	2	.6	6	.6	6.6	Yes	Poor attitude – can it change?

[illegible]

Practice Plans for Tryouts

Here are three basic tryout practice plans that you can use for your football tryouts. These plans are based on the drills included in **Flag Football Drills and Practice Plans**:

Tryout Practice Plan #1

0 to :10 – Passing, catching, quick sprints

:10 to :15 - Stretching

:15 to :20 – Warm up jog around the field

:20 to :35 – **Passing tree** (27) – Good passing is essential

:35 to :40 – Water break

:40 to :50 – **Shadow** (30) – Let's see who can cover the receivers

:50 to 1:10 – **Pit drill** (24) – all players involved.

1:10 to 1:20 – Conditioning

1:20 to 1:30 – **Gauntlet** (15) Quickness is important in flag football and this drill works on it

1:30 to 1:45 – **Flag pull tag** (21) See who can make the plays, and build conditioning

1:45 to 2:00 – Cool down and end of tryout practice talk

Tryout Practice Plan #2

0 to :10 - Passing, catching, quick sprints

:10 to :15 - Stretching

:15 to :20 – Warm up lap around the field

:20 to :35 – Flag pull relay (33) – Great warm up and competitive drill

:35 to :40 – Water break

:40 to :50 – Swarm defense (32) – Pull flags until everyone is out

:50 to 1:10 – Pit drill (24) – All players pulling flags

1:10 to 1:20 – Scrimmage

1:20 to 1:30 – Conditioning

1:30 to 1:45 – Ultimate (34) – Great drill to see who rises to the challenge

1:45 to 2:00 – Cool down and end of tryout practice talk

Tryout Practice Plan #3

0 to :10 - Passing, catching, quick sprints

:10 to :15 - Stretching

:15 to :20 – Warm up jog around the field

:20 to :35 – Air ball (12) – Put defenders against WR

:35 to :40 – Water break

:40 to :50 – Skeleton Offense (30) – Good to run basic plays to see who understands the game

:50 to 1:10 – Get your flags (25) – Great one on one drill for all players

1:10 to 1:20 – Pit drill (24) – All players pulling flags

1:20 to 1:30 – Cone cut and pull (32) – Cut at the cone and defenders need to read the play

1:30 to 1:45 – Scrimmage

1:45 to 1:55 – Conditioning

1:55 to 2:00 – Coach wrap up and cool down