



POP WARNER BECOMES FIRST NATIONAL FOOTBALL ORGANIZATION TO ELIMINATE KICKOFFS

Aims to decrease full-speed impact in games; Pop Warner to also reduce contact to 25% of practice time

LANGHORNE, PA (May 12, 2016) –In another major step to make the game safer and better: Pop Warner Little Scholars, Inc., the nation’s oldest and most prominent youth football organization, today announced that it will become the first national football organization to eliminate kickoffs. The ban, which will take affect in the three youngest divisions when the season begins this fall, is aimed at significantly reducing the amount of full-speed, head-on impact in games.

Instead of kicking it off, the ball will be placed at the 35-yard line to start each half and after each score in all Tiny Mite (5- to 7-years-old), Mitey Mite (7-9) and Junior Pee Wee (8-10) games. Following the season, Pop Warner will review the results of the move as it considers [implementation in older divisions](#).

“We are constantly working to make the game safer and better for our young athletes, and we think this move is an important step in that direction,” said Jon Butler, Pop Warner’s executive director. “Eliminating kickoffs at this level adds another layer of safety without changing the nature of this great game. We are excited to look at the results at the end of the year as we explore additional measures.”

Pop Warner also announced a further reduction of contact time in practice across all divisions. After limiting player contact to only 33 percent of practice time in 2012, Pop Warner will now restrict contact to approximately 25 percent of practice time, beginning this season.

The moves are just the latest in Pop Warner changes aimed at [enhanced player safety](#).

- In 2010, Pop Warner implemented the first youth sport concussion policy requiring that any participant removed from practice, play or competition due to a head injury or suspected concussion may not return to Pop Warner activities evaluated – and receives written clearance – by a licensed medical professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions, based on Washington State’s 2009 Lystedt Law.
- To ensure that Pop Warner stays on the forefront of new health and safety issues and any medical developments that may affect our young athletes, Pop Warner formed an independent Medical Advisory Committee in 2010. Led by neurosurgeons, researchers and sports medicine professionals, the committee is focused on the prevention, proper identification and treatment of concussions; hydration awareness and proper nutrition guidelines; and general health and safety issues.



- Pop Warner coaches are trained in USA Football's Heads Up Football program, where safer approaches to tackling and blocking are emphasized. As a result, Pop Warner programs had 87% fewer overall injuries and 76% fewer concussions in practice than non-Pop Warner programs that do not do Heads Up Football training in 2014, according to a study by Datalys. Pop Warner programs also had 24% fewer overall injuries than non-Pop Warner programs that *did* do Heads Up Football training.
- In 2012, Pop Warner banned full-speed head-on, blocking or tackling drills in which the players line up more than 3 yards apart.

About Pop Warner Little Scholars, Inc.

Founded in 1929 and headquartered in Langhorne, PA, Pop Warner Little Scholars is the nation's oldest youth football, cheerleading and dance organization and the only youth sports organization that emphasizes academics as a prerequisite for participation. Pop Warner participants enjoy the opportunity to learn and compete in their sports in an atmosphere that emphasizes fun, safety, academics and character. For more information on Pop Warner and its programs visit www.popwarner.com or follow Pop Warner on Twitter at http://twitter.com/Pop_Warner.

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