

Coaching Youth FOOTBALL

FIFTH EDITION

Endorsed by



*“...a great benefit
to those serious
about learning
how to coach...”*

—Howie Long

American Sport Education Program
with Joe Galat

Coaching Youth Football

FIFTH EDITION

American Sport Education Program
with Joe Galat

Endorsed by AYF



Human Kinetics

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Coaching youth football / American Sport Education Program, with Joe Galat ;
endorsed by AYP. -- 5th ed.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-8566-3 (soft cover)

ISBN-10: 0-7360-8566-1 (soft cover)

1. Youth league football--Coaching. 2. Football for children--Coaching.

I. Galat, Joe. II. American Sport Education Program.

GV956.6.R66 2010

796.332077--dc22

2010009059

ISBN-10: 0-7360-8566-1 (print)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-8566-3 (print)

Copyright © 2010, 2005, 2001, 1997, 1993 by Human Kinetics, Inc.

All rights reserved. Except for use in a review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying, and recording, and in any information storage and retrieval system, is forbidden without the written permission of the publisher.

Notice: Permission to reproduce the following material is granted to instructors and agencies who have purchased *Coaching Youth Football, Fifth Edition*: pp. 216-217 and 220-227. The reproduction of other parts of this book is expressly forbidden by the above copyright notice. Persons or agencies who have not purchased *Coaching Youth Football, Fifth Edition*, may not reproduce any material.

The Web addresses cited in this text were current as of April 2010 unless otherwise noted.

Content Provider: Joe Galat, American Youth Football President; **Acquisitions Editor:** Amy Tocco; **Managing Editor:** Laura Podeschi; **Copyeditor:** Patrick Connolly; **Permission Manager:** Martha Gullo; **Graphic Designer:** Nancy Rasmus; **Graphic Artist:** Francine Hamerski; **Cover Designer:** Keith Blomberg; **Photographer (cover):** Kevin Heitzman, © American Youth Football; **Photographer (interior):** Neil Bernstein, unless otherwise noted; photos on pp. 1, 11, 21, 37, 57, 75, 87, 137, 169, 189, and 203 by Kevin Heitzman, © American Youth Football; **Visual Production Assistant:** Joyce Brumfield; **Photo Production Manager:** Jason Allen; **Art Manager:** Kelly Hendren; **Associate Art Manager:** Alan L. Wilborn; **Illustrator:** © Human Kinetics; **Printer:** United Graphics

We thank Flamingo Park in Miami Beach, Florida, for assistance in providing the location for the photo shoot for this book.

Copies of this book are available at special discounts for bulk purchase for sales promotions, premiums, fund-raising, or educational use. Special editions or book excerpts can also be created to specifications. For details, contact the Special Sales Manager at Human Kinetics.

Printed in the United States of America 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The paper in this book is certified under a sustainable forestry program.

Human Kinetics

Web site: www.HumanKinetics.com

United States: Human Kinetics

P.O. Box 5076

Champaign, IL 61825-5076

800-747-4457

e-mail: humank@hkusa.com

Canada: Human Kinetics

475 Devonshire Road Unit 100

Windsor, ON N8Y 2L5

800-465-7301 (in Canada only)

e-mail: info@hkcanada.com

Europe: Human Kinetics

107 Bradford Road

Stanningley

Leeds LS28 6AT, United Kingdom

+44 (0) 113 255 5665

e-mail: hk@hkeurope.com

Australia: Human Kinetics

57A Price Avenue

Lower Mitcham, South Australia 5062

08 8372 0999

e-mail: info@hkaustralia.com

New Zealand: Human Kinetics

P.O. Box 80

Torrens Park, South Australia 5062

0800 222 062

e-mail: info@hknewzealand.com

Praise for Coaching Youth Football

"I first met Joe Galat at the age of 14 at the Cape Cod Massachusetts Football Camp. Getting the opportunity to learn the game the right way from Joe at a young age not only increased the chances of me being successful on the field but also increased my chances of staying injury free. Joe went on to coach in the NFL with the New York Giants and Houston Oilers. Joe coached a number of great players during his years in the NFL, including two Hall of Famers, Harry Carson and Elvin Bethea. In *Coaching Youth Football*, along with its online course, *Coaching Youth Football: The AYF Way*, Joe breaks down football fundamentals into simple, teachable techniques that are easy to grasp and execute and will be a great benefit to those serious about learning how to coach the great sport of football."

Howie Long

Football Analyst

2000 Pro Football Hall of Fame Inductee

Eight-Time Pro Bowl Selection

"I am proud to say that I have coached youth football for the past several years and have come to the realization that it involves far more than just Xs and Os. Promoting academic achievement, preparing for the season, ordering equipment, getting coaches to share a vision, coaching kids who are new to the game, and dealing with parents—the infrastructure of the organization alone can be a challenge to many rookie coaches. Joe Galat's *Coaching Youth Football* provides you with all the essentials to ensure your time spent with your kids and parents will be *prime* time."

Deion Sanders

NFL and MLB All-Star

"*Coaching Youth Football* by Joe Galat is the youth coach's playbook on the fundamentals of youth coaching. It provides essential information on coaching a youth football team—from the first day of practice to the final game of the season."

Jim Tressel

Head Football Coach

The Ohio State University

"Joe Galat was my linebackers coach when I was head coach of the New York Giants. Joe's insight on the basic fundamentals of the game detailed in this book will help everyone who is interested in teaching safe football techniques."

John McVay

Former NFL Head Coach

Former San Francisco 49ers Vice President of Football Operations

1989 NFL Executive of the Year

"Greater than my experience as one of Joe's Yale players in the early '70s is the fortune I've enjoyed for more than two decades through my marriage to Kathy Johnson, Olympic medalist in gymnastics. This relationship has reaffirmed for me the paramount lesson imbued by my dear old friend and coach: There is more to be gleaned from sport than mere winning and losing. Joe Galat's focus on fundamentals, team orientation, character development, and, above all, enjoying the process is completely consistent with the elements for enduring success long after the roar of the crowd has dimmed."

Brian Patrick Clarke
Actor and Former Yale Football Player

"Joe Galat's book and course on coaching football will assist football coaches and administrators at any level. It is a valued tool for developing players on the fundamentals of football so they may reach their potential on the field. More important, Galat's approach of using the values learned in football to teach life skills will be of great benefit."

Floyd A. Keith
Executive Director
Black Coaches and Administrators

To my favorite coaches: Faye, Gregg and Tracy, Shane and Tracy,
Joe and Diana, Adam and Jamie, and Jessica and Norman

To my children's children: Nic, Gabrielle, Abigail, Max, Gabriel,
Grace, Isabella, Mia, and Aiden

Welcome to Coaching

Coaching young people is an exciting way to be involved in sport. But it isn't easy. Some coaches are overwhelmed by the responsibilities involved in helping athletes through their early sport experiences. And that's not surprising because coaching youngsters requires more than bringing the balls to the field and letting them play. It also involves preparing them physically and mentally to compete effectively, fairly, and safely in their sport and providing them with a positive role model.

This book will help you meet the challenges and experience the many rewards of coaching young athletes. You'll learn how to meet your responsibilities as a coach, communicate well and provide for safety, and teach tactics and skills while keeping them fun, and you'll learn strategies for coaching on game day. There are more than 70 drills and games included to help you with your practices. We also provide a sample practice plan and season plan to help guide you throughout your season. For access to some of this information online, visit the following Web site: www.HumanKinetics.com/CYFootball5E/ExtraPoints. Such materials are marked with this symbol in the text:



This book serves as text for two online courses developed by the American Sport Education Program (ASEP). *Coaching Youth Football: The AYF Way* is the official coach-certification course of American Youth Football (AYF). Coaches and administrators affiliated with AYF can visit www.AYFCoaching.com for more information or to register for the course.

The ASEP *Coaching Youth Football* online course is available to all youth sport organizations and coaches. For more information about this course or other ASEP courses and resources, please contact us at the following address:

ASEP

P.O. Box 5076

Champaign, IL 61825-5076

800-747-5698

www.ASEP.com

Welcome From American Youth Football

On behalf of the national staff and the many volunteers of American Youth Football (AYF), I welcome you to *Coaching Youth Football*.

This book, like all American Sport Education Programs (ASEP), details the most important components of participation, safety, and sportsmanship. In *Coaching Youth Football*, not only will coaches confirm their existing ideas on coaching, but they will also find many new ideas. Some of the techniques and drills will be familiar; others have been closely guarded by their inventors.

Football, one of the greatest team sports in history, is a laboratory of life's lessons. From AYF to the professional ranks, there are no shortcuts. Every fundamental technique a player learns helps to expand his knowledge of the complex sport of football, and repetition in practice is required to hone his skills at each position. The experience of seeing a young player learn a new skill because of your instruction is unforgettably rewarding. "A teacher affects eternity," and one of the highest levels of teaching is coaching.

I encourage the support staff of your association to also review this valuable and important resource. A successful team needs a community of volunteers, administrators, parents, trainers, and coaches working toward the goal of teaching football for its values and enjoyment.

Football is America's game. It is no coincidence that many community and national leaders have been former football players. Thanks to football coaches everywhere who provided us with a positive experience, we are now dedicated to giving back to our next generation. Nothing is more important than helping kids.

To those we call coach: Thank you!

Joe Galat
President
American Youth Football, Inc.

Drill Finder

Modified Activities		
Blocking	Drive-Through	Page 62
	Pancake	Page 62
	Protecting the Quarterback	Page 63
	Sumo	Page 63
	Screen Door	Page 64
	The Escort	Page 64
	Follow the Leader	Page 65
Passing	Catching On	Page 66
	Passing	Page 66
	Air Ball	Page 67
Running	Hit the Hole	Page 68
	Handoff	Page 68
Defense	Heads Up	Page 69
	No-Passing Zone	Page 70
	Airtight D	Page 70
	Large and In Charge	Page 71
	Fourth and Goal	Page 71
	Fumble Recovery	Page 71
Kicking	Field Position	Page 72
	Trifecta	Page 72
	Kicking Into Gear	Page 73
Team Building	Tug-of-War	Page 74
	Football Volleyball	Page 74
	Tank	Page 74

Offensive Drills		
Offensive Linemen	Drive Blocking	Page 124
	Cutoff Blocking	Page 124
	Hook Blocking	Page 125
	Cross Blocking	Page 125
	Pass Protection Blocking	Page 126
	Sandwich Drill	Page 126
	Three-Second Drill	Page 127
	Double-Team Blocking	Page 127
	Free-Man Dropout	Page 128
	Zone Blocking	Page 128
Receivers	Breaking and Receiving Points	Page 129
	Ball Call and Turn	Page 129
	Round the Clock	Page 130
	Sideline Tap Dance	Page 130
	Tap and Go	Page 130
	Distraction Catch	Page 130
	Bad Ball Drill	Page 131
	Downfield Blocking	Page 131
Quarterback	Throwing on the Run	Page 132
	Quarterback Three- and Five-Step Drop Back	Page 132
	Passing Form	Page 133
Running Backs	Gauntlet	Page 134
	Running-Back Blocking	Page 135
Offensive Unit	Two-Minute Drill	Page 136
	Victory Formation	Page 136
Defensive Drills		
Defensive Linemen	Front-On Tackling	Page 159
	Pass Rush	Page 159
	Short-Yardage and Goal-Line Technique	Page 160
	Contain Drill	Page 160

> continued

> continued

Defensive Drills		
Linebackers	Angle Tackling	Page 161
	Cutback Runner Technique	Page 161
	Feet-Free Drill	Page 162
Defensive Backs	Three-Deep Zone Drop	Page 163
	Tip Drill	Page 163
	Man-to-Man Coverage	Page 164
	Footwork Drill	Page 164
	Zone Coverage	Page 166
Defensive Unit	Filling Your Gap Responsibility	Page 167
	Five Yards Outside Your Own Colors	Page 167
Special-Teams Drills		
Punting	Snap, Punt, Cover, Cup, and Catch	Page 185
	Pooch Punt	Page 185
	Punting Drill	Page 186
	Two-on-Two Blocking and Covering	Page 186
Kickoffs	Return Drill	Page 187
	Rugby Kickoff Return	Page 187
	Kangaroo Kick for the Onside Attempt	Page 187
Field Goals	Field-Goal Protection and Coverage	Page 188
	Blocking Kicks	Page 188
Special-Teams Unit	Ball Wrestling	Page 188

Key to Diagrams

Offensive Positions





BC	Ballcarrier
C	Center
F	Flanker
FB	Fullback
G	Guard
HB	Halfback
O	Offense
OL	Offensive lineman
QB	Quarterback
RB	Running back
SE	Split end
T	Tackle
TB	Tailback
TE	Tight end
WB	Wingback
WR	Wide receiver

Defensive Positions

CB	Corner back
DB	Defensive back
DE	Defensive end
DL	Defensive lineman
DT	Defensive tackle
FS	Free safety
LB	Linebacker
MA	Middle linebacker, weak side (Mack)
MI	Middle linebacker (Mike)
S	Outside linebacker, strong side (Sam)
SS	Strong safety
W	Outside linebacker (Will)
X	Defense

Special-Teams Positions

FG	Field-goal team
H	Holder
K	Kicker
KR	Kickoff return team
LS	Long snapper
P	Punter
PC	Punt coverage team
PR	Punt return team
R	Returner
SS	Short snapper
SV	Safety valve

	Player movement
	Block
	Tackle
	Pass, snap, or handoff

CO Coach

Contents

Welcome to Coaching	viii
Welcome From American Youth Football	ix
Drill Finder	x
Key to Diagrams	xiii

1	Stepping Into Coaching	1
2	Communicating as a Coach	11
3	Understanding Rules and Equipment	21
4	Providing for Players' Safety	37
5	Making Practices Fun and Practical	57
6	Teaching and Shaping Skills	75

FOOTBALL

7	Coaching Offense	87
8	Coaching Defense	137
9	Coaching Special Teams	169
10	Coaching on Game Day	189
11	Developing Season and Practice Plans	203

Appendix 215

Glossary 228

About the Authors 232

Stepping Into Coaching

1



COACHING

If you are like most youth-league coaches, you have probably been recruited from the ranks of concerned parents, sport enthusiasts, or community volunteers. Like many rookie and veteran coaches, you probably have had little formal instruction on how to coach. But when the call went out for coaches to assist with the local youth football program, you answered because you like children and enjoy football and perhaps because you wanted to be involved in a worthwhile community activity.

Your initial coaching assignment may be difficult. Like many volunteers, you may not know everything there is to know about football or about how to work with children. In our society, anyone involved in football needs to have a high level of credibility. As a coach, you also have a significant responsibility to the sport of football and to the young people whom you will coach. *Coaching Youth Football* presents the basics of coaching football effectively. For access to some of this information online, visit the following Web site: www.HumanKinetics.com/CYFootball5E/ExtraPoints. Such materials are indicated by this symbol in the outside margin of the text:



To start, we look at your responsibilities and what's involved in being a coach. We also talk about what to do when your child is on the team you coach, and we examine five tools for being an effective coach.

Your Responsibilities as a Coach

Coaching at any level involves much more than designing scoring plays for offense or drawing up defenses that keep the other team away from your goal line. Coaching involves accepting the tremendous responsibility you face when parents put their children into your care. As a football coach, you'll be called on to do the following:

1. Provide a safe physical environment.

Playing football holds inherent risks, but as a coach you're responsible for regularly inspecting the fields and equipment used for practice and competition (see the "Facilities and Equipment Checklist" in the appendix on page 216).

Before the start of the season, make sure you explain to the players and parents that football is a contact sport. Everyone should understand that the players will experience the following during the course of the year:

- They will get bumps and bruises.
- They will be tired and will need extra rest.
- They will need to increase their fluid intake to stay hydrated.

Teach players and parents the importance of keeping their equipment in good working order (see chapter 3 for more information). You should reassure them

that you will be teaching the safest techniques in order to help players avoid injury and that you have a safety plan in place (see chapter 4 for more information).

2. Communicate in a positive way.

As you can already see, you have a lot to communicate. You'll communicate not only with your players and their parents but also with the coaching staff, officials, administrators, and others. Communicate in a way that is positive and that demonstrates that you have the best interests of the players at heart (see chapter 2 for more information). Psychologists who study children have found that the level of a child's understanding varies with age. Reports indicate that the average age at which a child can safely navigate crossing a two-lane road is eight years. Most children think that an automobile driver can see them if they can see the driver (Whitebread and Neilson 1996). This implies that young players may not be capable of judging the angle needed for tackling a ballcarrier or the arch of a football on a long pass. A good coach will understand that the players perceive the game according to their age.

COACHING TIP Although it may take more thought and may require you to plan ahead, always explain to parents what you are trying to accomplish as a staff. In addition, explain to players what you want them to do rather than what they should not do.

3. Teach the fundamental skills of football.

When teaching the fundamental skills of football, keep in mind that football is a game, and therefore, you want to be sure that your players have fun. We ask that you help all players be the best they can be by creating a fun, yet productive, practice environment (see chapter 5 for more information). To help your players improve their skills, you need to have a sound understanding of offensive, defensive, and special-teams skills (see chapters 7 to 9 for more information).

The fundamental skills required for playing football can be better taught if you provide mental images and key words for the tasks you are teaching. Sport psychologists are employed by most professional sport teams. Although the relaxation techniques and mental rehearsal exercises used by professional teams are more sophisticated, we will introduce the basic learning concepts to you. In the following chapters, we provide some common images and key words used to teach football (e.g., "eyes up," "hit on the rise," "uncoil," "wrap up the ballcarrier," "drive the man," "snowplow him back," and "pancake him"). As a coach, you will soon develop your own fun vocabulary.

4. Teach the rules of football.

Introduce the rules of football and incorporate them into individual instruction (see chapter 3 for more information). Many rules can be taught in the first practice, including properly aligning the offense, avoiding illegal procedures, and