



# BLAZE FOOTBALL COACHING HANDBOOK GRADES 6-8

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## WELCOME

The Green County Family YMCA welcomes you and thanks you for becoming a youth sports coach. This will be one of the most rewarding and fun experiences you will be involved with. As a youth sports coach, you have the opportunity to make a positive impact on a child's life — an impact that will last a lifetime.

Teams typically include a combination of fairly skilled players and some that are new to the sport with little-to-no skill. Despite how prepared you are, your practices may not always go as planned. Remember, RELAX and HAVE FUN. The YMCA program is designed to provide a positive experience for our youth. Winning is not the most important aspect of our youth sports. We want all of our youth to learn to enjoy the sport as they develop their skills. They should leave practices and games feeling good about themselves, having had fun, and looking forward to the next game or practice!

## YMCA YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMS GOALS

- Build self-esteem
- Develop social skills, positive values, communication, and teamwork
- Teach the importance of physical fitness and health
- Foster responsibility and decision making skills
- Enhance leadership skills in both youth and adults
- Build relationships among peers and between coach and child.
- Support and strengthen family life
- Create an atmosphere and experience of FUN for all coaches, youth and families

## YMCA CORE VALUES

Athletes, parents, and coaches are expected to adhere to the YMCA's Core Values: Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, & Caring. Coaches will be responsible for interpreting these values into their everyday practices and games.

## UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR PROGRAMS

- Cooperation focused (not competition focused)
- Age appropriate, modified games
- Family involvement
- Leadership development

## OUR YMCA PHILOSOPHIES

### EVERYONE PLAYS

We do not use tryouts to select the best players, nor do we cut kids from YMCA Youth Sports. Everyone who registers is assigned to a team. During the season everyone receives equal practice time and plays at least half of the game as long as the following requirements are met:

- 1) The child is attending every practice and game.
- 2) Absences have been reported to the coach in a timely matter.
- 3) The player is listening to their coach.
- 4) The player is being a positive teammate and treating everyone, whether younger or older, with the same kindness and respect.

## **SAFETY FIRST**

Although kids may get hurt playing sports, we do all we can to prevent injuries. We've modified each sport to make it safer and more enjoyable to play. Coaches make sure the equipment and facilities are safe, and they teach the sport as we've prescribed so that the skills taught are appropriate for athlete's developmental levels. And coaches constantly supervise their players and stop any unsafe activities.

## **FAIR PLAY**

Fair play is about playing by the rules— and more. It's about coaches and players showing respect for all those involved in the YMCA Youth Sports. It's about coaches being role models of good sporting behavior and guiding their players to do the same.

## **POSITIVE COMPETITION**

We believe competition is a positive process when the pursuit of victory is kept in the right perspective. The right perspective is when adults make decisions that put the best interests of the players before winning the contest. Learning to compete is important for youngsters, and learning to cooperate in a competitive world is an essential lesson of life. Through YMCA Youth Sports we want to help kids learn these lessons.

## **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

YMCA Youth Sports encourages parents to be involved appropriately in their child's sports programs. In addition to parents being helpful as volunteer coaches, officials, & timekeepers, we encourage them to be at practices and games to support their child's participation.

## **SPORT FOR ALL**

YMCA Youth Sports is an "inclusive" sports program. We offer programs to all youngsters regardless of their race, gender, religious creed or ability. We ask our adult leaders to encourage and appreciate the diversity of children in our society and to encourage the kids and their parents to do the same.

## **SPORTS FOR FUN**

Sports are naturally fun for most kids. Sometimes when adults become involved in children's sporting activities they over-organize and dominate the activities to the point that it destroys kid's enjoyment. If we take the fun out of sports for young athletes, we are in danger of young athletes taking themselves out of sports.

## **TEACHING PRINCIPLES**

### **POSITIVE ATTITUDE**

Have a positive attitude. Smile! You are their role model! Set a good example, encourage, and compliment.

### **SPORTSMANSHIP**

Emphasize the importance of good teamwork and good sportsmanship, above all else!

### **SAFETY**

Emphasize injury prevention and safe behavior in practices. Teach appropriate skills for your age group. Be aware of potential hazards. Encourage water breaks and proper warmup.

### **CARING**

Create a supportive and caring environment for all players. Highlight the importance of taking care of each other as teammates.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

Teach and model responsible behavior. Have players assist with collecting equipment and cleaning up after practices. Encourage players to show up on time, attend all practices, and be active participants.

## **RESPECT**

Create a safe and welcoming environment for your players where all participants are treated with respect. Ensure players are respectful of each other, coaches, referees, and parents.

## **HONESTY**

Model, encourage, and reward honest behavior.

## **WARMUP**

Always take time to warm up. There are many ways to make warmups fun. Use your imagination!

## **SKILL LEVELS**

Get to know the different skill levels of your players. Stress the importance of skill development (over winning).

## **SKILL INSTRUCTION**

Always demonstrate the drill or skill technique. Have participants assist you with demonstrating skills, whenever possible. Ask the kids if they understand the drills before continuing and make sure each player is ready to begin. Use lots of repetition in explaining and demonstrating new skills. Have kids sit down while explaining drills if needed. Match players of similar size and have kids try every position. Implement the "IDEA" model for teaching each skill.

- I***    ***Introduce the drill***
- D***    ***Demonstrate***
- E***    ***Explain***
- A***    ***Attend to each child***

## **PLANNING**

Over-plan your activities for the day. It is better to run out of time than things to do. Save a few minutes after practice to reflect with youth on new skills learned that day and talk about what to expect in the coming week.

## **FUN**

Have fun coaching! The most rewarding practices are typically those where fun is given priority over skill development. Your kids will learn better in a fun environment and will be more likely to continue with the sport in the long-term.

## **COACH EXPECTATIONS**

### **GENERAL REMINDERS**

- Introduce yourself to your athletes and their parents!
- Discuss pertinent rules for your level of play.
- Describe your coaching philosophy to your athletes and their families. How you will work with youth? What is your approach to games and practices? How will you handle issues like discipline and commitment?
- Stress good sportsmanship for all people involved.

## **SPECIFICS ABOUT THE SPORT**

- Review your roster ahead of time. Feel free to communicate with parents via email.
- Introduce yourself to the parents when they drop off their child to a practice or a game to improve interactions between parents and coaches.
- If you are unable to attend a practice or a game, please find a replacement coach for that day. Ask parents about their experience with the sport and if they would be willing to help coach during practices or games, if needed. Please remember, they must first complete the YMCA's Volunteer form.
- Read your rules carefully, especially those specific to your grade or age level.
- Maintain a Safety First approach. Set strict rules about safety when organizing practices.
- Support other coaches and officials. Remember, some of them may be coaching or refereeing for the first time. Honor the values of RESPECT and CARING.
- Coaches are responsible for their own behavior. Be a positive role model for your youth athletes.
- Keep games in perspective. (The goal is to have FUN!)
- Incorporate character development discussions and activities.
- The YMCA philosophy is to give players equal playing time and a chance to play as many positions as possible. Give your players a well rounded experience.

## **FOLLOW THESE PRINCIPALS FOR AN EFFECTIVE PRACTICE**

- Plenty of activity
- Maximum use of time, facilities, and equipment
- Variety of activities and drills
- Progress from simple to complex
- Maintain a safe, successful, and non-threatening environment

## **EXPLANATIONS SHOULD BE:**

- Short
- Clear & concise
- Given with enthusiasm
- Directing attention to important cues

## **DEMONSTRATIONS SHOULD BE:**

- Repeated several times
- Done from several angles
- Clearly seen by all players
- Built on strengths or an attempt to correct errors
- Inviting of questions and further understanding

## **DURING PRACTICES & GAMES:**

- Recognize what players are doing correctly
- Always be positive and genuine in your comments
- Try to state a compliment followed by a correction and then another compliment
- Always encourage your players to try their best and let them know how proud you are of them
- Watch your players for signs of confusion and frustration
- Make sure you spread attention around to all your players

## **ANTI-BULLYING**

Bullying is not tolerated whatsoever. Those participating in any form of bullying should lose playing time. Depending upon the severity of the matter, the child may also be terminated from the program. Please report any issues to the Youth Program Director.

## **SPORTSMANSHIP**

Coping with winning and losing is, of course, an essential part of playing sports. Ideally, kids first learn how to deal with victories and defeats from their parents even before lacing up their first pair of sneakers. As a coach, it is up to you to reinforce the appropriate behavior for winning and losing.

## **WINNING**

Every player will tell you it is more fun to win than it is to lose. As the coach, you should strongly remind your team that “winning with class” is how you expect them to play. As such, if you spot one of your players taunting or humiliating an opponent when your team is way ahead in the game, simply call “time out” and have the player sit on the bench next to you. Explain to him or her that such behavior will not be tolerated by you and unless they can learn to control themselves, they will not be allowed back into the game. If they do happen to repeat the offensive actions again, put them back on the bench until the lesson is learned. Make sure the parents are aware of why the child was on the bench and spend time in your next practice talking about appropriate behaviors with your team.

## **LOSING**

Sometimes, especially with younger kids, a loss is accompanied by tears of disappointment. For some, losing may be a new and painful experience. Console them and praise them for their efforts. Never embarrass them. Tears are a normal reaction for young players who have just felt the sting of defeat. Your job is to reassure them. Use phrases like “Today, just wasn’t our day”, and “We played well, but the other team played a little better.” Those are encouraging phrases that can help motivate your players to keep trying!

## **DISCIPLINE**

It typically does not make sense to have a long list of rules. The best coaches make a few rules stand out. Help ensure all the kids on the team understand not only the rule, but why it is important and the consequences for breaking it. Make sure all discipline is positive and not degrading.

## **PRE-GAME JITTERS**

Young players can become nervous and anxious before a big game. Be careful to not become the source of the pre-game anxiety. Before the game, wear a smile and look relaxed, even if you are nervous! Players will be more prepared if they are relaxed and ready to have fun. Bring them together and have a quick meeting to remind them to have fun, relax and concentrate on what they have learned at practice.

## **HANDLING “PUSHY” PARENTS**

What do you do when you have a parent who always wants to give you a piece of his or her mind? Give them 10 uninterrupted minutes to speak. Then look them in the eye, thank them for their feedback, and respond to their suggestions and comments. If you have a parent with a bunch of ideas, or someone who thinks they can do it better than you, invite them to be an assistant coach. The invitation may get them to back off, or even better, you may have a new assistant and they will have to do everything they were asking you to do.

## **CURRICULUM**

In striving to teach life skills and football skills to participants, the YMCA youth football program focuses on the athlete first. Winning is secondary. Rules and equipment are modified for age appropriateness to ensure a successful season. Below is a list of goals and skill sets we hope all players will acquire by the end of the season.

- Understanding how to work as a team
- Good sportsmanship
- Comprehension of basic football skills
- Basic throwing and catching skills
- Stopping on the whistle
- Basic understanding of the rules of the game
- Respecting the role of the coaches and referee
- Understanding and limiting fouls
- Development of body control

**GREEN COUNTY FAMILY YMCA**

1307 2nd St., Monroe, WI 53566

(608) 325-2003

[www.greencountyyymca.org](http://www.greencountyyymca.org)

## **TEAM INVOLVEMENT**

The number one reason youth drop out of programs is because they do not feel connected to a team. It is your job to create team unity and encourage new friendships from the very beginning. Help mix the youth up on a regular basis in a way that fosters new friendships.

## **ORGANIZING A GOOD PRACTICE**

The key to a good practice is organization. Review your practice plans beforehand. Know how to pivot and adjust your plans as necessary to foster the best practice possible. The best practices have clear learning goals. Recognize how and when to adjust your plans. Pay careful attention to each one of your athletes and participants. When evaluating a team practice or game, ask yourself questions like:

- Is the game safe?
- Are all of the players having fun?
- Are all players engaged in the game?
- Is the game working?
- Do all players understand the game?
- Is the objective of the game being achieved?
- Are all players being included?
- Is participation being maximized?
- Is the game appropriate to the ability level of each player?
- Are all players being challenged?

## **VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

A volunteer agreement is the foundation of the working relationship between the Green County Family YMCA and its volunteers. A volunteer agreement clarifies the expectations of both parties in relation to length of commitment, confidentiality, attendance at training and adherence to the Green County Family YMCA's policies, procedures and philosophies.

This Volunteer Agreement demonstrates how we value our volunteers. Although, we are unable to compensate you for your time, we want to assure you that we appreciate your contribution to our organization. We are dedicated to ensuring that you have a quality volunteer experience which is both productive and rewarding.

The Green County Family YMCA commits:

- To provide adequate information and training so you may meet the expectations as described in your volunteer description.
- To explain what is required of you and to support and provide encouragement to help you achieve the desired results.
- To assign you with a named supervisor who will provide you with regular support and act as a "go to" person.
- To treat you with respect and courtesy at all times.
- To be receptive to any comments and feedback from all of our volunteers.
- To value and recognize our volunteers as a significant resource in achieving the goals of our organization.

As a volunteer, you should always strive:

- To fulfil your role as outlined in the Coaching Manual to the best of your ability.
- To follow the policies, procedures, and philosophies of the Green County Family YMCA.
- To encourage good sportsmanship and an experience of fun, at all times.



## BLAZE FOOTBALL VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT & COACHING CONTRACT

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
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1. I acknowledge that I have read and reviewed the Coaching Manual. I understand the Athlete Code of Conduct and agree to support the rules and conditions stated within the code. I support the YMCA Youth Sports Philosophy, which is based on participation, fun, physical fitness and health, skill development, teamwork, fair play, family involvement and volunteer leadership.
2. I understand that my responsibilities as a volunteer youth coach are of great importance and that my actions have the potential to significantly influence the young athletes I coach. Therefore, I promise to conduct myself in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Coaches.
3. I will demonstrate the YMCA core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility at all times during both practices and games. I will ensure all activities serve as a foundation for life learning and are structured to help the athletes achieve their potential in spirit, mind, and body.
4. I will strive to serve as a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, and maturity. I will treat each athlete, opposing coach, official, parent, and administrator with respect and dignity. I will uphold the authority of officials who are assigned to the contests in which I coach and I will assist them in every way to conduct fair and impartial competitive contests. I understand I am also responsible for the conduct of any fan's cheering for my team.
5. I will do my best to learn and teach the fundamental skills, evaluation techniques, and strategies of my sport. I will become thoroughly familiar with the rules of my sport including all identified objectives. I will strive to achieve these objectives and communicate them to my athletes and their parents.
6. I have at least a basic working knowledge of basic first aid practices and emergency procedures. I agree to report any and all injuries to the appropriate authorities or personnel.
7. I will complete all YMCA mandated trainings prior to the season beginning.
8. I will learn the strengths and weaknesses of my athletes so that I might place them in situations where they have a maximum opportunity to achieve success. I will conduct my practices so that all athletes have an opportunity to improve their skill level through active participation. I will play each child equally as mandated by the YMCA, and I will rotate my players equally and fairly.
9. I will communicate to my athletes and parents as much as possible via email, handouts, schedules, and phone calls.
10. I will cooperate with the Youth Sports Director of the Green County Family YMCA in the enforcement of the rules and regulations, and I will report any irregularities that violate sound competitive practices.
11. I will protect the health and safety of my athletes by insisting that all activities under my control are conducted for their psychological welfare, rather than for the vicarious interests of adults.
12. I will not use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco while in contact with players or on any property that the YMCA is using. Any coach who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs during practices or games will be asked not to return to our program for the season.
13. I agree to accept the volunteer coaching position at the Green County Family YMCA. I understand that I will not be compensated for my time while volunteering. I have read and understand the YMCA's policies and procedures and agree to abide by them fully.
14. I hereby pledge to provide positive support, care, and encouragement for the children participating in youth sports by following this YMCA Coaching Contract. I understand that if I violate this contract in any way that I may be asked to step down from coaching the program.

Signature of Coach/Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_