

2021 Westfield PAL Flag Football Season announcement

Welcome to the 23rd season of flag football sponsored by the Westfield PAL! We are thrilled to be returning to a more normal flag experience, while continuing to be sensitive to the latest guidance from the CDC and NJ Dept of Health regarding the COVID pandemic. The following information should help you with your questions regarding the start of the season. This information is also posted on the [Westfield PAL Flag page](#), or you can go to www.westfieldpal.org and go to the Flag Football page under the Programs menu. For those of you who have played before, welcome back! For our first time players and families, we hope you have a fantastic time, as flag football is a youth sports program that has always also been a terrific community experience.

Season duration and weekly practice and game times

This year's season will begin with our usual start-of-season minicamp on September 11, 2021. Our practices and games will begin on Saturday, September 18 and will run through November 20.

This season our normal game schedule (from Sep 18 – Nov 20) will be as follows every week by age group:

- 1st-3rd grade: 8:15-9:45 AM
- 4th-6th grade: 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM
- 7th-9th grade: 11:45 – 1:00 PM

Note that times for our older age groups have gone back to what they were in prior years and are slightly different to what we were running last year when we had COVID protocols in place.

Week 1 Minicamp on September 11, 2021

On Saturday, September 11th, we will conduct our annual minicamp for all age groups in Tamaques Park located off of Lamberts Mill Road in Westfield. In addition to being a fun way to kick off the season, the minicamp serves several purposes: first, it enables our younger and first-time players to become familiar/acclimated with playing football in Tamaques Park, second, it provides some instruction to players and lastly, it serves as an evaluation for coaches who will be participating in the draft process later that day.

Please note that the minicamp for the older players is scheduled BEFORE the minicamp for the 1st-3rd grade players, in order to allow time for the coaches of the older age groups to participate in the draft.

Mini-camp instructions for players in grades 4-6 and 7-9:

- Report to Tamaques Park between 8:30AM and 8:45 AM dressed in Tee shirts, shorts and cleats (no metal cleats), and check in at the registration table to secure a number for the minicamp and draft.
- This minicamp will start promptly at 9:00AM and will finish at 10:00AM.
- Players will go through 3 stations (running, passing, receiving) for instructional, evaluation and draft purposes.
- Following the minicamp, at approximately 10:15AM, we will have a brief commemoration event as this is the 20th anniversary of 9/11. All players and parents are encouraged to stay to participate in this event.
- Coaches and their assistants will then stay in the park as we will run separate drafts to select our 4th-6th grade and 7th-9th grade teams.

Mini-camp instructions for players in grades 1-3:

- We are running a brief commemoration event at approximately 10:15AM in recognition of this being the 20th anniversary of 9/11. All parents and players are encouraged to arrive at the park by 10AM to attend, but please note that the older players will already be at the park and parking is likely to be challenging.
- Otherwise, please report to Tamaques Park by 10:30 AM on Saturday, September 11 dressed in Tee shirts, shorts and cleats (no metal cleats).
- These players will also go through a series of 3 stations (running, passing, receiving) for instructional purposes.
- The stations will start around 10:45AM and will run for about an hour. Following that minicamp, you may leave Tamaques Park and you will be contacted by your coach during the week via email about your team.

For families with players in both age groups, please feel free to come early and or remain in the park for both groups if that is easier for you. As noted, the draft will be held immediately following the earlier minicamp session for grades 4-6 and 7-9. Players in grades 1-3 will be placed on to a team. Players do not need to remain in the park for the draft.

If you do not hear from your coach during the week of September 13th, please stop by the registration/coffee table on Saturday morning, September 18th and you will be directed to your team.

Season Schedule

The season officially starts on Saturday, September 18th and is scheduled to run through Saturday November 20th

Due to the popularity of the program and to maximize playing time for the participants, we will continue our three-game schedule. Details are as follows:

Players in grades 1-3 will have the following schedule each week:

- 8:15AM – 8:45AM: Practice
- 8:45AM – 9:45AM: Game

Note that in the first 2-3 weeks of the season, coaches in 1st-3rd grade may agree to extend practice by 10-15 minutes, but by Week 4, games should start promptly at 8:45AM.

Players in grades 4-6 will have the following schedule each week:

- 10:00AM- 10:30AM: Practice
- 10:30AM - 11:30AM: Game

Note that as the season progresses, coaches in 4th-6th grade may agree to shorten practice slightly to maximize game time; your coaches will be making those decisions on a weekly basis so please plan accordingly.

Players in grades 7-9 will have the following schedule each week:

- 11:45AM – 12:00PM: Practice
- 12:00PM – 1:00PM: Game

Coaches will communicate matchups and field location for each team to their teams. All fields are clearly marked at Tamaques Park and a map of the fields including game schedules is available for viewing at the bottom of the [flag football web page](#) at www.westfieldpal.org. In the event of inclement weather, you will be notified by your coach or a league director as to the cancellation of any games.

COVID-19 related notice

We are very pleased to be able to run the 2021 flag football season as a more “normal” season, as the NJ Dept of Health officially has no limits for outdoor sports as of early September. Consistent with that, we do not plan to implement any COVID screening protocols this year, nor are we attempting to put in place or enforce requirements for masking and distancing. With that said, we are mindful that the situation with COVID continues to be ever-changing and we will be monitoring updated guidance from the CDC and NJ Dept of Health. We also encourage all individuals to take whatever personal precautions they are most comfortable with, but please recognize that flag football is a sport where players do get together in huddles to know what plays are called and kids will be in occasional contact or proximity to one another - although any contact / proximity during game play will not be sustained, and this is an outdoor sport.

Uniforms, equipment, and what to wear to flag

The Westfield PAL provides a team jersey and a flag belt for every player, and balls for the teams to use in practices and games. As a result, players do not need to provide or purchase any equipment for flag. Players can wear any sneakers or cleats that do not have metal spikes, and should dress however they feel is most comfortable given the weather conditions.

Sportsmanship

The Westfield PAL flag football program is very serious about exhibiting good sportsmanship and conduct during the games. While the games may seem to get competitive, the idea is for the players to have fun and enjoy themselves in a safe, fun environment. Please do your best to encourage all players during the games and display a positive attitude. Anyone displaying poor sportsmanship will be asked to leave the field. You will recall that during the registration process you had reviewed and accepted the PAL code of conduct. We thank you very much for your cooperation.

Field cleanliness and dogs

Please make sure that you pick up after yourself on the sidelines following your child's game. Take pride in this beautiful park that we have available to us for these games. Remember that other sports programs use the park during the week and anything that you can do to clean the fields up after your games will be greatly appreciated by our volunteers, who ensure that when we leave the fields at the end of the day we are leaving them in good shape for the other sports programs that use Tamaques. Also, please note that we ask that you do not bring your dogs to the fields at Tamaques Park during the games. We have had incidents where dogs have snapped at young children. While your pet may not be that type of dog, we ask that you refrain from bringing your pet on to the field.

Parking in Tamaques Park

Each Saturday morning presents a major parking challenge in Tamaques Park. We encourage you to use the side streets leading in to the park as this will help with traffic flow in and out of the park during the time change for the games. You will find it much easier to use these side streets when exiting the park following the completion of your game. The Westfield Police do issue tickets to those illegally parked in Tamaques Park. For safety reasons, all players should be dropped off in the parking lot area of the park and not along the actual park driveway as that can create a dangerous situation. We have had accidents involving automobiles and pedestrians who are also using the park.

Coffee (but sadly, still no donuts!) sponsorship

Traditionally, the PAL has provided coffee and donuts for players and parents, but with last year's COVID protocols, we unfortunately had to temporarily discontinue that tradition. This year, we are pleased to report that we will once again be providing coffee! However, we continue to feel it's inadvisable to provide donuts. We recognize that most of our players are younger children who are not yet eligible for vaccination, and we are not comfortable with having all of the younger players clustering around the tables as they jockey for position to grab their preferred donut (which sometimes involves touching a number of other donuts on their way to making their selection!). We are much more confident in our parents' ability to grab coffee in a safe and orderly manner!

While we do not charge for coffee, donations are graciously accepted and help offset the cost. Your continued generosity is very much appreciated and every cent goes directly to the PAL flag football program. As we have done in the past, we continue to seek out weekly sponsors for the coffee table. If you are interested in sponsoring coffee for one of our Saturday mornings, please let John Dugan (John.Dugan@CohnReznick.com) know right away as these tend to fill up quickly. This is an excellent way to promote a business in town. Past sponsors have indicated that they see a very nice return on their investment towards this sponsorship. The cost for a day is \$200.00 this year. Signage for that sponsor will be prominently displayed each week. Any sponsors should also feel free to bring any additional sponsorship material and tables as well.

Special events

The Westfield PAL wants the players and families to understand that this is more than just a football program. Each year, we sponsor several special events that impact our community. These include our annual Woman's Flag Football Tournament in October in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month where moms, sisters and any other female family

and friends suit up to play flag football following the regular scheduled flag games. All proceeds raised go towards curing breast cancer. The PAL also sponsors holiday food and coat drives and honors our nations veterans. **Specific to this year, our start of season minicamps will run on the 20th anniversary of 9/11, and in addition to the details provided above, we will separately share more information on how we plan to commemorate the day.** Please look for future announcements on these upcoming events.

We look forward to a great season and we hope that you and your family enjoy the flag football program. A great season starts with you, our players and their families. Remember there are varying degrees of athletic ability on the field and your positive encouragement impacts these children more than you can imagine. Thank you very much in advance for your participation in our program. See you out there!

Best Regards,

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