

To: Commissioners and Coaches

From: Jim McGrath, Chairman

Bulletin Number: 20171005-B-1.01 (Replaces FCYFL Bulletin #32012 issued in September 2012; The new Policy Bulletin is substantially the same.)

Player Participation Rule

The Player Participation Rule was implemented by the FCYFL Board of Commissioners primarily to ensure consistent playing time in the Anklebiter, National, and Central Divisions. This bulletin is specifically directed at these competition levels.

In the past, traditional methods of monitoring playing time or depending on coaches to EQUALLY apply the same standard have failed. In the end, kids weren't playing. When kids don't play... they don't return the following year. Players cannot develop their football skills, learn the game, and have fun when they sit the bench! The wounds are long lasting ... and kids don't return. The FCYFL and the Club suffers, but more importantly, kids don't have fun!

Since the implementation of the FCYFL Participation Rule our league has had higher percentages of players return year-on-year. When kids play, they improve... it's that simple! Players are returning because they had fun and their football skills are developing.

The Participation Rule is the strength and foundation of our League and the expectation for full compliance is the total responsibility of every coach, administrator, and Club Commissioner. Each coach must know, understand, and apply the participation rule as intended.

Any violation or deviation from the spirit

and intent of the rule will be dealt with severely. Sanctions will be levied against the head coach, assistant coaches, the team, and/or the organization. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, forfeiture of games, Club monetary penalties, and elimination from playoff competition. This is all part of the process to educate our volunteers about our expectations on playing fair and developing young people into better football players and citizens – and to increase their enjoyment of the game.

The American Division, FCYFL's most competitive level, rosters players that should consistently accumulate a reasonable share of playing time throughout a game and the season. The Club Commissioner must immediately correct American Division teams that choose players and don't play them a fair and reasonable amount of plays per the spirit and intent of the rule and the overall concept of player participation.

Please refer to the FCYFL Rulebook, or contact your club commissioner, for specifics on the American Level requirements.

The Mechanics of the Rule (Anklebiters, National, and Central)

1. The maximum number of players per team at Anklebiters, National, and Central Divisions is (22).
2. The offensive team MAY choose to play (12) kids while running their offense or defense, using the (12th) player to shuttle plays into the huddle. The coach can choose to shuttle plays on either offense or defense, HOWEVER, you cannot do both. Should a coach elect to shuttle plays, then the team is prevented from shuttling plays on the opposite side (offense or defense whichever the case may be). The players running the shuttle MUST start on the other side of the ball when the next change of possession occurs. They must continue to stay out on the field, and play uninterrupted until the next change of possession. This pattern of play must be followed throughout the game until the end.
3. At the **CHANGE of ANY** possession, all the remaining players on the bench, **MUST** enter the game, and stay in the game, until another legal change of possession takes place, i.e., interception, fumble, or loss of downs.
4. The following special team plays are exempt from this rule: **Kickoff, Kickoff Receive, Extra Point Attempts, Extra Point Block/Defense**. These – and only these – are not counted as regular scrimmage plays for the Player Participation Rule.
5. The following “special team” plays **ARE** subject to this rule and do not allow substitutions of one-way players: **Punt, Punt Block, Field Goal, and Field Goal Block**. These are considered regular scrimmage plays and the Player Participation Rule applies. In other words, these are regular 4th down (normally) plays and a coach may **NOT** bring in his best players for these situations at the expense of one-way players.
6. **SUBSTITUTING** for players is allowed, but only for those players that are playing both ways! Substitutions must not create a situation where a 2-way player is no longer playing a full game on one side of the ball or another.
7. One-way players **MAY NOT** be substituted out when they are not doing their job, or because they missed some practices, or for any other reason EXCEPT injury. If a coach is found to be using this exception (parents will report this and this is posted on the FCYFL website) as a loophole in the rule they WILL be expelled from the League. Make sure that if you take a child off the field for an injury that you have someone monitoring them for when they are ready to return. We take this part very seriously. Take a time out and coach the kid up if they are not doing their job. Don't take him/her out of the game – it is a violation. (See call-out above for reference to loopholes)
8. No coach can deviate from these requirements and “invent” substitution patterns or specialty packages for whatever reason(s)! Making substitutions for one way players on the “goal line”, or “goal line stands”, “jumbo” offenses, etc. are prohibited. Basically, when the going gets tough, you can't “beef up” by substituting for one-way players. The spirit and intent of the rule is the guiding principle...kids need to play! (See call-out above for reference to loopholes)

If you find yourself looking at this bulletin and the FCYFL Rules to find loopholes, you are not living up to the spirit and intent of the rule and you are violating the Code of Conduct.

9. If a player is listed on the official roster, arrives at the game with a uniform, they must play! No club administrator or coach, may discipline a player for whatever reason by holding them out of a game, or any portion of a game, for any reason! Excuses like “missing practices”, late for practices, conduct, etc. are not acceptable. Major issues are to be dealt with by the Commissioner and the Executive Committee prior to it becoming an issue at the game.
10. Any deviation from the “spirit and intent” of this rule, as interpreted by the FCYFL, will result in **SEVERE** penalties.
11. The FCYFL expects all coaches and commissioners to monitor this rule for compliance. Should a situation develop where a violation of the rule is detected, you are obligated to immediately notify all concerned. Clubs are required to report violations on their Field Reports.
12. The Player Participation Rule is NOT the responsibility of the Game Officials.

Every organization has been formally briefed on the importance of complying with this rule at the League’s monthly meetings. Ignorance of the rules is not an excuse. The teams that know the rule, understand the importance of the rule, practice the rule, and they have integrated all components of the rule into their coaching. These teams have no problem with compliance.

Violators will have consequences. Don’t put yourself, your players and their families, or your Club in the position of being sanctioned. You are responsible.

PLAY the KIDS!