

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

NFHS Partners with USA Football to Advance Player Safety

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bruce Howard

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (August 12, 2013) — The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) has partnered with USA Football to advance high school football player safety on a national level by endorsing USA Football's Heads Up FootballSM program.

The NFHS leads the development of high school interscholastic sports and activities, serving its 50 member state high school athletic associations plus the District of Columbia. USA Football is the sport's national governing body.

The NFHS supports player safety-focused training programs for its membership, which includes more than 19,000 high schools. The NFHS encourages high schools to adopt training programs such as Heads Up Football as a means to minimize the inherent risk in the sport. Football, with 1.12 million high school student-athletes, is the No. 1 participatory sport of high school boys by nearly a 2-to-1 margin.

In partnership with the NFHS and USA Football, 32 high schools spanning eight states – Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Virginia – will pilot Heads Up Football in 2013. All high schools across the U.S. will be eligible to adopt Heads Up Football in 2014.

Each participating high school program will designate a Player Safety Coach. This individual is trained by USA Football to instruct fellow coaches, parents and players on Heads Up Football's tackling mechanics that aim to reduce helmet contact, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concussion recognition and response protocols and proper helmet and

shoulder pad fitting. Player Safety Coaches see that Heads Up Football’s protocols are put into practice throughout the season. In addition, all participating coaches complete the USA Football-NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Football certification course.

“The health and well-being of our student-athletes is our No. 1 priority,” said NFHS Executive Director **Bob Gardner**. “Rooted in education, Heads Up Football is advancing sound behaviors and techniques as to the manner in which football is taught and played. USA Football has melded needed insight and techniques from experts in medicine and sport for the benefit of our students.”

“Heads Up Football is raising standards in how coaches are prepared to teach and how player safety is addressed to coaches, players and parents,” said USA Football Executive Director **Scott Hallenbeck**. “Nothing comes before the health and safety of our young athletes, and the NFHS shares that commitment with us. Our game is undergoing a significant behavior change for the better through the education and training Heads Up Football delivers.”

In addition to benefiting approximately 4,000 high school student-athletes in 2013, Heads Up Football has been adopted this season by nearly 2,800 youth football programs representing nearly 600,000 youth players in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., this season.

Five primary elements of USA Football’s Heads Up Football program for high schools:

Heads Up Tackling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USA Football’s Heads Up Tackling technique, endorsed by medical and football experts, teaches players to keep their heads up and out of the line of contact.
Coaching certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All coaches will complete the USA Football-NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Football certification course designed for NFHS membership.
Concussion recognition and response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches learn and are assessed on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concussion recognition and response protocols. • Coaches, parents and players are taught concussion-related protocols.
Player Safety Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed by each participating Heads Up Football high school program. This individual is trained by USA Football to implement Heads Up Football’s player safety protocols, including coaching certification, and conducts safety clinics for fellow coaches,

	parents and players.
Equipment fitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches, parents and players are taught proper helmet and shoulder pad fitting.

In addition to the NFHS, organizations that support Heads Up Football include the American Football Coaches Association; the Atlantic Coast Conference; the Big 12, Big Ten and Pac-12 conferences; AAU Football; the Boys and Girls Clubs of America; the National Police Athletic League (P.A.L.); the NFL and NFL Foundation; Pop Warner Little Scholars; and the Sports and Fitness Industry Association.

USA Football’s Heads Up Tackling technique was developed with contributions of USA Football’s Tackle Advisory Committee, which includes Northwestern head coach **Pat Fitzgerald**, UCLA head coach **Jim Mora**, former NFL running back **Merril Hoge**, Miami Christopher Columbus High School head coach **Chris Merritt** and sports psychologist **Dr. David Yukelson**.

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.6 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.

About USA Football

USA Football leads the game’s development, inspires participation and ensures a better and safer experience for all youth, high school and other amateur players. The independent nonprofit is the official youth football development partner of the NFL, its 32 teams and the NCAA’s Atlantic Athletic Conference. USA Football (www.usafootball.com), endowed by the NFL and NFLPA in 2002, provides more than \$1 million annually in equipment grants and youth league volunteer background check subsidies.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Bruce Howard, 317-972-6900
National Federation of State High School Associations
PO Box 690, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206
bhoward@nfhs.org

Steve Alic, 317-489-4417
USA Football
425 North Pennsylvania Street, Suite 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
salic@usafootball.com