

Our football story:

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*Football is America's favorite sport, and [Heads Up Football](#) is changing the way the game is taught at the youth and high school level. USA Football is asking football moms, dads and coaches to tell us why they believe in football and how the game has influenced their lives. *Share your story, and we will consider it for inclusion in this series. Make sure to include your name, hometown and a photo with you and your favorite football people to accompany the feature.**

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Should I let our son play tackle football?

This question is being asked in households in every city and town across the United States. [Warriors Youth Sports](#) in Denver and the [Arapahoe Youth League](#) would like to provide our answer to this question a resounding YES and then provide you information to help you reach the same conclusion.

Having played this sport, coached my own sons and instructed many others, I strongly feel that every child who shows interest should be allowed to play tackle football, the greatest game out there. Football provides the best opportunities for your child to learn many life lessons that will apply to the future. Life lessons to help them be better men, husbands, fathers, citizens, employees, bosses & you name it.

Football is a hard sport. There is no debating that. However, I believe many of you will echo that at times life is pretty hard as well. There is no other sport that requires the same levels of teamwork, self-sacrifice, reliance on others and physical preparedness that a player learns in tackle football. Like life, football knocks you down time and time again and requires you to get up and face those

challenges until you master them. Football teaches perseverance, something that can be applied to playing a musical instrument, public speaking, math, chemistry, work skills, boot camp, special projects, family budgets and so much more.

You may accept all of this, but it doesn't address your fears that your son will get seriously hurt playing tackle football. Unfortunately, this is an area where the national media has done a great disservice to this question. Football in America is news. It is the most popular sport on TV, and it will always attract the negative story if there is one out there.

In February 2012, USA Football [commissioned a two-year study of injuries in football](#) called the Youth Football Player Safety Surveillance Study. This independent scientific study monitored 13 leagues with more than 200 teams and 4,000 players, ages 5 to 14, in six states. For the study, medical professionals attended every practice and documented every injury from an upset stomach to the smallest bruise to broken bones and concussions during the course of the 2012 and 2013 seasons. The study's findings include:

- Nearly 90 percent of youth players did not sustain an injury that resulted in missing a game or practice
- Of the 22.4 percent of players who reported an injury, 70 percent returned to play the same day
- Of the 11.9 percent of players who missed a game or practice because of injury, 60 percent returned to play within seven days.
- Bruises were the most common injuries (34 percent) followed by ligament sprains (16 percent)
- 1.4 percent of players suffered a broken bone or fracture with 77 percent of these in the forearm, wrist or hand
- More than 95 percent of players in the study did not sustain a concussion
- No youth player age 7 or younger sustained a concussion at any time during the two-year study
- No catastrophic head, neck or heat related injuries were reported among 4000 players during the study's two-year span
- Injury rate and time loss rate goes up with age

This research marks the first significant data-driven study performed regarding youth football and represents a huge advancement in learning and understanding for our parents. It is believed to be the first study of its scope in youth football's 80-plus year history. One national expert in the area of sports medicine and injury rehabilitation is [Dr. Stanley Herring](#) from the University of Washington. Dr. Herring points out your children are far more likely to get injured in wheel-based recreation such as skate boards, bikes, rollerblades or on school playgrounds or using trampolines than in tackle football. All of this data leads to the conclusion that tackle football is not radically unsafe for your son to play.

Another important consideration has been raised by Tom Cove, president and CEO of the [Sports & Fitness Industry Association](#). Mr. Cove recently stated in an industry forum that the biggest health issues in the U.S. comes from inactivity. Inactivity has become a pandemic in the U.S. In 2007, 25 percent of Americans said they were inactive, (nearly 70 million people). That number rose to 28 percent by 2012 (nearly 80 million people) and is projected to grow to 31 percent in 2018 (nearly 91 million people). In Mr.

Cove's opinion, the benefits of football to the youth of the U.S. is huge, and football is a tremendous opportunity to get our children active.

The Warriors, the AYL and USA Football are committed to creating the best atmosphere in which your child can learn this sport. That begins with coaching education, clear and consistent direction from medical experts on player safety and a strong focus on teaching the fundamentals at the heart of your child's youth sports program everything that USA Football's Heads Up Football is about. That is why Warriors and the AYL are again partnering with USA Football. The AYL has committed to pay the costs in 2014 for all of our coaches head and assistant to obtain coaching certifications in tackle football through USA Football. All of our member clubs will be appointing Player Safety Coaches to oversee the implementation of Heads Up Football, and the AYL will appoint a League Level Player Safety Coach. The purpose of these PSC positions is to educate all of our coaches regarding proper methods to run practice drills, proper organization of practices, teach proper Heads Up Tackling techniques and provide information for our parents who may have concerns or questions. All of this adds up to the overwhelming commitment that the Warriors and the AYL have to continue to find ways to make this game we love safer for your son.

We believe that tackle football is the greatest sport for a child to play, and it is important to measure a sport's benefits against its risks. Tackle Football is a hard sport, no question, but with the commitment to make this sport safer for all of our players we hope you can now answer the question posed above with your own resounding yes!