



USA FOOTBALL GROWS WITH THE KIDS IT REACHES

IN DECEMBER 2002, under the leadership and vision of NFL Commissioner **PAUL TAGLIABUE** and NFL Players Association Executive Director **GENE UPSHAW**, **USA FOOTBALL**, a national advocacy group dedicated to acting as a unifying voice for youth football, was created. Funded by the **NFL YOUTH FOOTBALL FUND**, it provides support for organizations involved with youth and amateur football. Since that time, USA Football Executive Director **DAVE OGREAN** has met with coaches, officials, administrators, parents, educators, community leaders, and its partner organizations to discuss issues concerning amateur football and youth development. It was out of those discussions that **Huddle 2004: The National Conference on Youth & Amateur Football** originated.

The inaugural Huddle was held in Cincinnati on June 25-26 of this year. Coaching, youth development, health and safety, and league development were among the issues addressed. Tagliabue, Upshaw, USA Football Chairman and former Buffalo Bills Quarterback **JACK KEMP**, and Cincinnati Bengals Head Coach **MARVIN LEWIS** were among the leaders who discussed the state of youth and amateur football in America.

“The coaches, administrators, officials, parents, players, and fans who joined us at Huddle took part in a conversation which will strengthen our sport and get more kids on the football field in this great football nation,” said Ogrian.

On August 24, USA Football and the National Sports Center will host the inaugural USA Football Classic in Blaine, Minnesota. The Classic will involve youth football teams, grades 5-8, from across the country. This premier preseason youth football event is open to teams from any league or association. The Minnesota Vikings will hold a practice scrimmage on the first day of the Classic, giving young football players and their coaches an opportunity to watch and learn from NFL players.

“Over the past year, USA Football has accomplished much in promoting the increasing popularity of playing a sport that combines mental and physical elements of competition,” said USA Football Chairman Kemp. “From meeting with leaders involved at the grassroots level and developing an invaluable network, to hosting the first national dialogue on youth football at Huddle 2004 to the USA Football Classic, our work will strengthen the great sport of football and encourage more youngsters to get in the game.”

FOOTBALL PARTICIPATION IN AMERICA

Tackle: 5.8 Million
Touch/flag: 14.9 Million
Total: 21 Million

FOOTBALL TOP HIGH SCHOOL SPORT;
COLLEGES ADD FOOTBALL, MOVE UP IN DIVISIONS

More boys play football in high school than any other sport, according to the most recent statistics released by the National Federation of State High School Associations. In the 2002-03 school year, 1,023,142 boys played 11-man football, showing an increase of 20,408 participants and marking the fourth year in a row 11-man football topped the one-million participant mark.

This total nearly doubles boys’ basketball, which was second with 540,874 participants, a decline of more than 250 basketball players from the previous season. Another 24,743 boys participated in 6-man, 8-man, or 9-man football, bringing the total number of boys playing high school football to 1,047,885.

MOST POPULAR BOYS HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS PROGRAMS

SPORT	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
1. Football (11-man)	1,023,142
2. Basketball	540,874
3. Track and Field (outdoor)	498,027
4. Baseball	453,792
5. Soccer	345,156

In addition, several schools at the collegiate level have recently added football to their athletic program. **NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN** and **OHIO DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY** (under Director of Football Operations **JOHN PONT**, the former Yale coach) will be fielding teams for the first time this year in their history.

And think these two schools are not excited about their impending season? Ohio Dominican has a countdown ticker (days, minutes, seconds) to its kickoff (September 4) on its website... and North Carolina Wesleyan raised \$65,000 at its inaugural “Football Gala” in January.

In 2005, **SETON HILL COLLEGE** in Greensburg, Pennsylvania will kick off its first football season ever. Following is a list of schools that have recently initiated football programs:

COLLEGE	START DATE/LEVEL	COLLEGE	START DATE/LEVEL
Benedict (SC)	1999-NAIA	Southeastern Louisiana	2003-NCAA, Div. 1-AA
Paul Quinn College	2000-NAIA	St. Paul’s College (VA)	2003-NCAA, Div. III
Southern Nazarene	2000-NAIA	Huntingdon	2003-NCAA, Div. III
Florida Atlantic	2001-NCAA, Div. 1-AA	Southern Virginia	2003-NAIA
Christopher Newport (VA)	2001-NCAA, Div. III	Webber International	2003-NCAA, Div. III
Erie Comm. College (NY)	2001-NJCAA	North Carolina Wesleyan	2004-NCAA, Div. III
Southern Maine	2002-NCAA, Div. III	Ohio Dominican	2004-NAIA
Florida International	2002-NCAA, Div. 1-AA	Seton Hill	2005-NCAA, Div. III
Coastal Carolina	2003-NCAA, Div. 1-AA		

History soon will be made at **FLORIDA A&M**, which will become the first historically black university to compete at the NCAA Division 1-A level in football since the classification was created in 1978. The NCAA approved Florida A&M’s application to join Division 1-A last year. To prepare for the move in 2005, the Rattlers will play four 1-A opponents this season, including Virginia Tech and Tulane.