



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NFL—45

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USA FOOTBALL, NFL& NFL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION **CELEBRATE YOUTH FOOTBALL WITH** **“PLAY FOOTBALL MONTH” AUG. 25-SEPT. 30**

New York, NY (August 16, 2005) --The end of summer signals the beginning of the football season for millions of young players, their coaches and families. The NFL, NFL Players Association, and USA Football are teaming again to celebrate the opening of the season and salute the participants in youth, high school, and college football with **PLAY FOOTBALL MONTH**, it was announced today.

PLAY FOOTBALL MONTH, an expansion of last year's *Play Football Week*, will take place from August 25-September 30 at NFL stadiums and other communities from coast to coast. The celebration theme is: "Be Part of the Football Family."

NFL teams, colleges, high schools, and youth football organizations across the country will host events and recognition programs, including clinics, skills competitions, scrimmages, picnics, and parades.

NFL teams will offer free tickets to youth football organizations for one home game during the third and fourth (August 25-September 2) preseason weekends. Last year, NFL teams donated 55,000 tickets to youth and military personnel. Teams will recognize youth football players during pregame ceremonies of many games by having them line up in full uniform in front of NFL players on the sidelines during the playing of the national anthem. Youth teams also will scrimmage during halftime of designated NFL games.

Youth football organizations coordinating local **PLAY FOOTBALL MONTH** events include: the Amateur Athletic Union, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Jewish Community Centers Association, National Association of Police Athletic Leagues, National Federation of State High School Associations, National Recreation & Park Association, Pop Warner Little Scholars, YMCA of the USA, American Football Coaches Association, American Youth Football, and military bases.

"As we begin our season, it is important to recognize and salute the millions of players who help make football the most popular sport in America," said NFL Commissioner **PAUL TAGLIABUE**. "Playing football is a great way for young people to be active and physically fit and part of a team. The lessons they learn on the field will help them in tackling many of life's other challenges."

"Football is more than just passing, running, blocking, and tackling. You learn about working with others to achieve a common goal," said USA Football Chairman **JACK KEMP**. "During Play Football Month, we salute the more than 12 million children who participate in the sport, along with the parents and volunteers who make it happen, especially the coaches. As **TROY AIKMAN** said, 'Youth football coaches are the true gatekeepers of the sport.'"

"Without the opportunity of participating in youth football, most professional football players would not have had the chance to play in the National Football League," said **GENE UPSHAW**, NFL Players Association Executive Director. "All NFL players, past and present, owe a great debt to youth coaches and other volunteers who made football a positive, life-affirming experience."

The **Play Football Month Celebration Awards** will again recognize events that best celebrate the sport of football and bring the community together. While NFL teams are not eligible for the award, non-profit organizations with which they work are eligible for nomination. Last year's winning celebrations included a pep rally, parade, picnic, skills clinic, and scrimmage. Among last year's 11 winners, several worked with their local

NFL team, including the Naperville Pop Warner (Chicago), Naples Gators (Miami), San Diego Youth Football & Cheer Conference (San Diego), and Western New York Youth Tackle Football Federation (Buffalo).

National print, radio and television messages about **PLAY FOOTBALL MONTH** will begin appearing this month. This year's ads feature Hall of Famers **DAN MARINO** and **JOHN ELWAY**, Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback **BEN ROETHLISBERGER**, St. Louis Rams wide receiver **TORRY HOLT**, and San Diego Chargers wide receiver **KEENAN MCCARDELL**.

For information on local events, check the **PLAY FOOTBALL MONTH** events calendar at www.usafootball.com.

Parents and others may become involved in **PLAY FOOTBALL MONTH** by signing up online for free materials and using the toolkit or calling 703-918-0007.

USA Football (www.usafootball.com) is an independent non-profit organization that was launched by the NFL and NFL Players Association through a grant from the NFL Youth Football Fund in December 2002. It is the first national advocacy group created to galvanize, support, expand, and promote the sport of amateur football. Jack Kemp, former U.S. Congressman and quarterback who led the Buffalo Bills to the 1964 and 1965 American Football League Championship, serves as chairman.

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