

## 2022 TCNFL FAN/COACH BEHAVIOR MEMORANDUM

**To: All TCNFL Coaches and Parents**

**From: John Swanson, Director TCNFL**

**Date: August 16, 2022**

This youth football league has been in existence in one form or another since 1969. ( I actually played in the predecessor of this league in 1971) The league's success and growth has primarily been the result of the dedicated and common-sense efforts of many people over the years, mostly volunteers. Many of our volunteers either stayed involved after their kids were finished playing or volunteered without ever having kids who played in the league.

In the 42 years that I have been involved with this league as a coach and director 20 years as a coach (and by no means did I exhibit perfect behavior as a coach) and 25 years as director (for a few years I was both a coach and director), we have never felt there was a reason to communicate directly with parents, fans, and coaches regarding behavior. We always relied on each community to communicate behavior expectations with their parents, fans, and coaches. Communications have taken the form of written "codes of conduct", direct team meetings, or both. The league, of course, has always had rules that prescribe discipline for fan or coach misconduct, including progressive discipline and permanent removal for repeat acts of bad behavior or immediate removal for single egregious acts of misconduct. The league, or any individual community, has rarely had occasion to permanently remove/ban a coach or fan.

***The rules we have, and the efforts of individual communities have therefore been largely successful. Most participants, parents and coaches have been and are great. The problems we have encountered have originated from a very small percentage of people from many different communities over the years. And experience has taught me that regardless of the information/education that is communicated, and regardless of the rules and enforced consequences, there will always be a small percentage of individuals who "don't or won't get it", and there will always be several incidents each year involving individuals who "do get it" but have a bad day (we are all human).***

Unfortunately, over the past several years we have experienced a significant upward spike in bad behavior. This should be no secret, as it is occurring in all sports at all levels and has been extensively publicized by the media. One of the consequences of increased bad behavior is that experienced officials in all sports are quitting in droves, and all sports are also having difficulty attracting new officials. The shortage of officials has become critical in our league - reaching crisis proportions. If your child participated last year, it is likely that one or more of your child's games had no officials or less than a full complement of officials. If your child participates in other sports, it is also likely the shortage of officials in those sports has also affected your child's participation in those sports.

We had at least a dozen incidents last year that resulted in the police being called, and many other less serious incidents where the police were not involved. In addition, more than one lawsuit was threatened. We also had many games where there was open consumption of alcohol and/or marijuana at the field (all at either city or school district facilities where such on-site consumption is prohibited) and/or excessive amounts of trash left by a team and their fans after their game was done. These problems originated from parents, fans, and coaches from several different communities/organizations. They did not originate from just one or two communities/organizations or just one or two individuals. The problems are league wide and require a comprehensive response. People who know me recognize that I am honest, direct, and blunt, and have spent 42 years working with youth and high school football, and the maintenance of positive programs is a passion.

All league participants (directors, coaches, parents, fans, and players) must acknowledge the following:

1. ***This is youth football and is not a training ground for future Division 1 or professional players.*** The result of a middle school football game has no impact on any individual player's future. It goes without saying that a very small percentage of league participants will advance to play in college or play professionally. There are many factors that determine whether any individual makes it to those levels. While we all want our kids to achieve success, there has been a tendency in recent years to continuously professionalize youth sports to ridiculously low levels and attach silly levels of importance to the outcome of youth games. I suggest that we celebrate each game and the fact that our kids can participate and savor close, competitive, and well-played games regardless of the outcome.
2. ***Respect our facilities and the officials. Make it a "team effort" to assure that officials are treated with respect and that our facilities are left clean.*** We have access to many first-class playing fields at little or no cost, and we should prioritize maintaining this access. After all, we as taxpayers own these facilities and we should treat the facilities as we would our own personal property. Cocktails must be consumed at home or at the favorite fan watering hole, ***preferably after*** the game. If your team has issues with a particular official or group of officials, the place to address the issues is not on the field or the in the parking lot. Your coaches and directors can take the issues up with us as directors after the game. We have disciplined or removed many officials over the years for misconduct, bad behavior, substandard performance, or lack of hustle.
3. ***Remember that officials at the highest levels miss calls.*** How often are there now "camera reviews" in professional sports? How many calls are blown by professional and Division 1 football crews, with 7 officials? And we expect a two- or three-person crew of part-time officials to be perfect?
4. ***Keep in mind that both our community/organization participants and the league reserve the right to suspend or permanently remove coaches and fans for repeat acts of bad behavior, or for single acts of particularly egregious behavior.***

***I suggest that parents and coaches act in concert – as a "team", to reinforce positive behavior and encourage those few predisposed to cause problems to behave in a positive manner.. The vast majority of parents, fans and coaches who do "get it" should strive to establish a positive culture where this nonsense will not be tolerated.*** While I recognize that this might sometimes be difficult or impossible, establishing an overwhelming positive culture might sway those few who might be predisposed towards inappropriate behavior. Coaches, with the assistance of parents, are crucial in establishing this positive culture!

Our goal is to have a great 2022 season! In order to minimize – and hopefully eliminate the bad karma it will take a universal team effort!