



Santa Barbara FNL – Policy Statement on Protective Headgear

Purpose

Santa Barbara Friday Night Lights (FNL) is committed to providing the safest, most enjoyable youth sports experience for all players in grades K-8. As part of our ongoing safety efforts, the League has evaluated the use of soft protective headgear (“soft helmets”) in youth flag football.

Background

Flag football is a non-contact sport. Compared to tackle football, flag football involves significantly fewer head impacts and substantially lower concussion risk. Current sports medicine research and national athletic governing bodies indicate that soft protective headgear may reduce minor bumps, bruises, or abrasions, but there is limited and mixed evidence that such headgear prevents concussions in non-helmeted sports.

League Position

Santa Barbara FNL will allow and support the use of soft protective headgear as an optional piece of equipment for players. Families who choose headgear may do so for comfort, peace of mind, or personal safety preference.

At this time, Santa Barbara FNL will not require protective headgear, nor will the League assert that such equipment prevents concussions.

Acceptable Equipment

If worn, headgear must meet all of the following criteria:

- Soft-shell or pliable construction
- Non-abrasive outer surface
- No hard plastics
- Commercially manufactured for use in non-contact sports
- Secure, properly fitted, and worn as designed by the manufacturer

Headgear may not create a competitive advantage, pose a risk to other players, or compromise sportsmanship or gameplay.

Coaching & Safety Standards

Headgear is one component of safety, but not the sole or primary method of injury prevention. Santa Barbara FNL will continue prioritizing safety through:

- Qualified coaching instruction
- Strict rule enforcement to maintain non-contact play
- Proper flag-pulling and movement technique
- Concussion awareness and removal-from-play protocols
- Emphasis on sportsmanship, body control, and respect for all players

Parent/Guardian Choice

The decision to wear protective headgear remains with the family. The League encourages families to consult available research, athletic trainers, and healthcare providers regarding headgear and concussion safety.

Ongoing Review

Santa Barbara FNL will continue monitoring youth sports safety research and guidance from national sports governing bodies. Policies may be updated as new information becomes available.

Values & Mission Affirmation

Above all, Santa Barbara FNL is committed to keeping youth sports fun, fair, safe, and centered on the kids. Our goal is to foster a positive athletic environment for all players — boys and girls — in grades K-8 across Santa Barbara County.