

**\*\*You only need to complete this form if you plan to play football\*\***

**FORM F(08-09)      FOOTBALL WARNING STATEMENT**

Football is a contact sport and injuries will occur. The coaches working in our program are well-qualified professional people. Fundamentals related to playing football will be emphasized repeatedly on and off the field. The information contained within this list of rules and procedures is to inform the young men in our football program of the proper techniques to practice for maximum safety in the contact phase of the game. Serious head and neck injuries leading to death, permanent brain damage or quadriplegia (extensive paralysis from injury to the spinal cord at the neck level) occur each year in football. The toll is relatively small (less than one nonfatal severe brain and spinal cord injury for every 100,000 players) but persistent. They cannot be completely prevented due to tremendous forces occasionally encountered in football collisions, but they can be minimized by manufacturer, coach and player compliance with accepted safety standards.

**TACKLING, BLOCKING, AND RUNNING THE BALL**

By rule, the helmet is not to be used as a “ram”. Initial contact is not to be made with the helmet. It is not possible to play the game safely or correctly without making contact with the helmet when properly blocking and tackling an opponent. Therefore, technique is most important to prevention of injuries. Tackling and blocking techniques are basically the same. Contact is to be made above the waist, but not initially with the helmet. The player should always be in a position of balance, knees bent, back straight, body slightly bent forward, HEAD UP, target area as near to the body as possible with the main contact being made with the shoulder. Blocking and tackling by not putting the helmet close to the body as possible could result in shoulder injury such as a separation or a pinched nerve in the neck area. The dangers of not following the proper techniques can be from minor to disabling, to even death. The reason for following the safety rules in making contact with the upper body and helmet is that improper body alignment can put the spinal column in a vulnerable position for injury. If the head is bent downward, the cervical (neck) vertebrae are in a bind and contact on the TOP OF THE HELMET could result in a dislocation, nerve damage, paralysis, or even death. If the back is not straight, the thoracic (mid-back) and lumbar vertebrae are also vulnerable to injury with similar results if contact again is made to the TOP OF THE HELMET. The University of the South’s daily workout includes exercises to develop strength in the neck muscles and is one of the best methods of preventing neck injury and enabling an individual to hold his head up even after getting tired during a workout or contest.

**BASIC CONTACT POSITION AND FUNDAMENTAL TECHNIQUE**

If the knees are not bent, the chance of knee injury is greatly increased. Fundamentally, a player should be in the proper contact position at all times during live ball play. This point will be repeated during practice. The danger of anything from strained muscles, to ankle injuries, to serious knee injuries requiring surgery may result. The rules have made blocking below the waist illegal. (An exception is the two by four yard zone at

the line of scrimmage.) Cleats have been restricted to no more than 1/2 inch to further help in preventing knee injuries. A runner with the ball, however, may be tackled around the legs. In tackling, the rules prohibit initial contact with the helmet or grabbing the face mask or edge of the helmet. These restrictions were placed in the rules because of serious injuries resulting from noncompliance to these safety precautions. Initial helmet contact could result in a bruise, dislocation, broken bone, head injury, or internal injury to organs such as kidneys, spleen, bladder, etc. Grabbing the face mask or helmet edge could result in a neck dislocation, nerve injury, or spinal column damage causing paralysis or death. The illegal play by participating athletes will not be tolerated and all players are repeatedly reminded of the dangers of unsportsmanlike acts.

### FITTING AND USE OF EQUIPMENT

Shoulder pads, helmets, hip pads, pants including thigh pads and knee pads must have proper fit and use. Shoulder pads which are too small will leave the shoulder point vulnerable to bruises and separations; they could also be too tight in the neck area, resulting in a possible pinched nerve. Shoulder pads which are too large will leave the neck area poorly protected and will slide on the shoulders, making them vulnerable to bruises and separations. Helmets must fit snugly at the contact points: front, back, and top of the head. The helmet must be safely "NOCSAE" branded; the chin straps must have four contact points to the helmet and must be fastened; and the cheek pads must be of the proper thickness. On contact, too tight a helmet could result in a headache. Too loose fit could result in headaches, a concussion, a face injury such as a broken nose or cheek bone, possibly as serious as paralysis or even death. Each student-athlete should examine his helmet daily for cracks in the shell, proper fit, and appropriate placement and condition of all pads. The use of external hinged knee braces will not prevent all knee injuries but should spread the forces applied to the knee joint. The braces should be applied and secured properly when a student-athlete is so instructed. This report does not cover all potential injury possibilities in playing football, but it is an attempt to make the players aware that fundamentals, coaching, and proper fitting equipment is important to the safety and enjoyment of those playing football at The University of the South.

The above information has been explained to me and I understand the necessity of using the proper techniques while participating in the football program. I understand that I am not to use the helmet to butt, ram, or spear an opposing player. This is in violation of football rules and such use can result in severe head or neck injury, paralysis, or death both for me and opponents. No helmet can prevent all head or neck injuries a player might receive while participating in football.

Student-Athlete's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_