



Rookie Tackle Overview

Rookie Tackle is a small-sided form of the game that introduces young players to tackle football. It consists of six, seven or eight players per side on a 40-yard-by-35-yard field with a clear focus on skill development and fun. As part of USA Football's vision for long-term athlete development, it serves as a bridge between flag football and 11-player, full field tackle football.

Rookie Tackle modifies rule and field dimensions. Coaches, commissioners, officials and parents are educated on its game adjustments, mechanics and skills. This is designed to advance the physical literacy of young athletes to foster active and healthy development. Similar to baseball's progression of tee-ball to "coach pitch" to "player pitch," it provides a developmentally appropriate approach to football.

This player pathway concept is in alignment with the American Development Model (ADM). The United States Olympic Committee, in partnership with the National Governing Bodies, created the ADM framework in 2014 to help Americans realize their full athletic potential and utilize sport as a path toward an active and healthy lifestyle.

Through the guidance of this framework, USA Football's goal is to strengthen a player pathway for the sport. Athletes may potentially progress through flag football, Rookie Tackle and 11-player tackle football, building a foundation for success as they enter high school football and beyond.

Key Aspects of Rookie Tackle Game Play:

- Six, seven or eight players on the field per team
- 40-yard-by-35-yard playing field size, scaled for a youth athlete's age and skill level
- Maximizes field space by playing two games simultaneously on a regulation-sized field
- Players learn multiple positions and skills; position-specialization is not introduced
- Smaller teams foster more playing time and opportunities for improvement, success
- Players on offensive and defensive lines begin every play in a two-point stance
- Removal of special teams encourage more plays from scrimmage and skill development
- More focused, individualized coaching attention by virtue of a smaller roster

** Rookie Tackle variations will be evaluated during the 2017 pilot, including players-per-side and field size.*