



IMPLEMENTING ROOKIE TACKLE®

INDIANAPOLIS CATHOLIC YOUTH ORGANIZATION (CYO)

INTRODUCTION

Bruce Scifres, a longtime high school coach at and member of the Indiana Football Hall of Fame, implemented USA Football's Rookie Tackle in Indianapolis' Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) with tremendous success in 2019.

Indianapolis CYO offers a wide spectrum of youth sports, including football, across dozens of central Indiana Catholic parishes while instilling values such as sportsmanship, respect, tolerance and humility.

Rookie Tackle is Contact Game Type within the Football Development Model (FDM). Rookie Tackle employs smaller playing fields, features smaller rosters for more individualized coaching, rotates players through multiple positions to learn more skills and centers on teaching the fundamentals by removing special teams play.

COACHES IMPRESSIONS

Scifres still speaks with buoyant enthusiasm of his program's first year of Rookie Tackle, which was played in grades 3-4.

"I even had a coach after one of the championship games come up to me and say, 'This is genius, this whole concept,'" Scifres said. "And I'll share that in my 27 years as a head coach at the high school level, I don't know that I've ever had my name and the word 'genius' included in the same sentence together with too many people, so I think that makes it very obvious what people thought of the concept."

COACHES IMPRESSIONS (CONTINUED)

“Coaches were very impressed and shared with me that, first of all, they liked the fact that we had smaller numbers,” Scifres said. “We played 7-on-7 and having fewer kids on the team, it gave them a chance to have more one-on-one time or small-group time in regard to teaching technique.

“They felt like they were able to better coach the kids and then also along with that, they felt like their kids were better all-around football players because of the concept of kids rotating positions between quarters.”

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

Scifres faced resistance for employing Rookie Tackle rather than 11-player tackle in his youngest age division, but the doubts of coaches and parents were dispelled by season’s end.

“As the season progressed and then especially as we had our playoff and championship games, I had several coaches just come up and say that they were skeptical of it to begin with, but as they saw how well things went and how energized families, kids and their parents were about it, they just became fans of it too.”

PARTICIPATION IMPACT

Scifres also said that introducing Rookie Tackle increased participation in his youngest age division.

“For those who are considering Rookie Tackle, I would say if you have seen a decline in numbers with your younger kids or there seems to be somewhat declining interest, whether it's from the kids or their parents, I think that considering Rookie Tackle is a very smart thing to do,” he said.

*The original version of this case study appeared on USA Football's blog at:
<https://blogs.usafootball.com/blog/7781/hall-of-fame-coach-believes-in-rookie-tackle>*

IMPLEMENTING NEW GAME TYPES

Understanding why you should adopt new game types is just the start. Reach out to your Regional Manager to learn how you can access more resources in 2021.

VISIT [USAFOOTBALL.COM/REGIONAL-MANAGERS](https://usafootball.com/regional-managers)