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Running the routes at Skyhawks flag football camp

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At the Skyhawks camp last week at Chapparosa Park all the young players get involved. No one sits on the sideline. They either block, pass, catch balls or pull flags.

"They get the basics of every sport and the fundamentals down," said Skyhawks coach Setiam Allah. "There's a lot of kids who already knew how to play football, so review the basic fundamentals."

For offensive drills Allah helped teach the boys the pass patterns through a receiving tree.

Defensive drills included a game called Monster Linebacker. Four linebackers try to grab the flag of ball carriers as they run past. Allah and the other coaches tried to discourage the boys from tackling.

Another game called Sharks and Minnows had the players in a line and three or four sharks try to rip off their flags before they ran to the other side. This encouraged the players to be able to avoid the flag being pulled by spinning or putting on moves. Instead of playing capture the flag they played capture the balls. Each side tried to steal the other team's three balls and bring them to the other side of the end zone without having their flags pulled.

Jim Kinney, 10, of Mission Viejo had no football experience prior to the camp. He gave him a chance for a lot of exercise.

"I learned it's contact if you play tackle football," said Kinney. "It's not that hard to play if you have flags like we do. It's not physical at all."

Kinney said he liked offense better because he was able to catch the ball and score some touchdowns. Although wide receiver was his favorite position he also made two interceptions.

"It's kind of hard to grab the flag when they spin," said Kinney. "You just need to keep an eye on their stomach and after he spins, put an arm out and grab the flag."

Along with a sailing and basketball camp this summer Laguna Niguel's Nick Garnett also participated in the flag football camp. After playing tackle football in the Pop Warner League for the San Clemente Seahawks, Garnett said tackle was much tougher than flag football.

“In flag football you can't tackle or hit as hard,” said Garnett. “You have to keep your arms inside and can't extend your arms when blocking. On defense you can run in and pull the flags and are allowed to knock the guards over.” Garnett, 13, said he preferred to play defense better because he didn't have to worry about protecting the quarterback. As an offensive guard Garnett used his legs to keep out the defensive players. He enjoyed learning the fundamental passing routes and improving on his receiving skills.

Alex Eisner, 12, of Laguna Niguel, said after attending Skyhawks camps he got to know the basics of football a lot better.

“There's so much we learned that you couldn't get from just watching a game on TV,” said Eisner. “You need to have blockers to protect the quarterback. You just don't out for a pass.”

On defense the boys played some zone but mostly a man to man defense. Eisner said some players didn't guard their man but went for the interception and the chance to be the hero.

In the camp the boys learned how to work their offensive or defensive strategies as a unit. Some players took the camp more seriously than others, said Eisner.