



IT REGRESSES SKILLS

I'll be the first to admit that pickup football was my favorite pastime growing up. When November rolled around, every kid in the neighborhood knew that it was time to pick captains, throw each other in the leaves and argue about who should be All-Time Quarterback. The games were fun, random, and always just a little bit violent.

But we were kids. And almost 10 years later, none of us are any good at football.

So the fact that some high school coaches are turning to 7-on-7 as a summer refresher is puzzling. Practice is only effective if it prepares you for actual game situations. Frankly, I don't see how 7-on-7 does that.

Let's focus on the issue of play-calling. More often than not, teams playing 7-on-7 will do things such as set "picks," run absolutely ridiculous crossing patterns and use other gimmicks that would only work in a 7-on-7 game. Defensively, they might use schemes that would not work in a real game, such as committing a guy to jump in the face of the QB as he looked back to pass, as if it were an in-bound pass in basketball.

Simply put, it doesn't improve team skills, it regresses them. That style of football is loose, unbridled and laidback. None of those describe an actual game situation. Seven-on-seven was born in the backyards of young children, and that's where it should belong.

Patrick Iversen, a senior at Marcus High School, posts his stories at neighborsgo.com/patrickiversen.



PATRICK IVERSEN



Hebron High School's Chris Summers plays during defense during a recent game.

7-ON-7 FOOTBALL

The Fox Sports Southwest 7-on-7 Football State Championship for Division I, which includes all qualifying 4A and 5A schools, gets under way July 10 in College Station. Three area teams — Coppell, Hebron and Denton Guyer — qualified for the state tournament earlier in the summer.

WHO PARTICIPATES

Teams from across the state participate, competing in State Qualifying Tournaments, or SQTs, throughout the summer. In 16-team SQTs, the top two teams qualify for the state tournament; in eight-team tournaments, just the tournament winner qualifies. As a result, teams from El Paso to Tyler and Amarillo to Corpus Christi will compete in College Station this weekend.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- **Coppell** is led by quarterback Hayden Hawk and a variety of receiving options, including Cam McDaniel, Jake Wohlford and David Busby. Coppell will play Katy Seven Lakes, Stephenville and Tomball in pool play on July 10.
- **Denton Guyer** is making its second consecutive appearance in the state tournament, and has plenty of firepower, including receiver Luke Russell.

YOU DECIDE: Greg Tepper and Patrick Iversen are always looking for new topics about which to argue. What should the two sportswriters debate next? Send your topic ideas to gtepper@neighborsgo.com, and it might just find its way into next week's edition of *neighborsgo*.

Seventh heaven?

neighborsgo editor Greg Tepper and *neighborsgo* high school sports columnist Patrick Iversen debate the value of 7-on-7 football.

What is it?

7-on-7 football's biggest difference from its 11-man counterpart is that there are four less players on the field. The field, too, is smaller: 45 yards instead of the standard 100. There are no pads, and players are tackled by two-hand touch. Players are typically quarterbacks, wide receivers, tight ends and running backs. There are no running plays, no kicks and no punts. The only way to move the ball is by passing because there is no blocking or rushing the quarterback. The quarterback has four seconds to throw the ball.



IT EMPHASIZES SKILLS

It's simple, really: 7-on-7 football represents everything that's fun about the gridiron.

It's fast-paced, it takes an incredible amount of skill, and most importantly, it improves football teams.

I understand the argument that not having the linemen — the biggest warriors on the field — cheapens the game in a sense. But what's great about 7-on-7 is that it isn't really football, yet it uses football skills.

The 7-on-7 game allows quarterbacks to develop a rapport and timing with their receivers entering the next season, making the transition to two-a-days and, eventually, the first game all the more easier.

And in a world where more teams rely on the pass for offense, timing can be everything.

It also gives the skill players — the receivers, quarterbacks and running backs — a chance to work out, often increasing their speed and agility for the upcoming season.

Beyond that, it's simply a lot of fun to watch and play.

Although everyone wants to win, there's a bit less pressure on the players during 7-on-7 season than there is during the regular season.

I love football, and can't wait for fall to roll around for the new season. But until then, 7-on-7 is a great substitute.

Neighborsgo editor Greg Tepper blogs about sports at Tepper's Take — neighborsgo.com/blog/take.