

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Dodgeball, flag football leagues to begin

By Genea Webb

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Angela Kryl isn't like many girls her age. The 10-year-old West View resident isn't interested in dolls, makeup and frilly things like her friends. Tackles, touchdowns and interceptions are what excite her.

"I've always loved football and thought it'd be a nice thing for me to do," said Angela, who will be a fifth-grader at West View Elementary School in the fall.

So when she found out through friends that the Backyard Flag Football League had started in her area, she knew she had to join.

Since joining the league, Angela, who's nicknamed Hines Ward for her ferocious performances on the field, has been given numerous accolades.

The Vipers player was named Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player during the first week of play because she scored two receiving touchdowns and one throwing touchdown.

"I love living up to my nickname," Kryl said with a laugh.

According to league founder Rich Pilardi, a North Hills resident who used to donate his time coaching and refereeing games in Greenfield, the Backyard Flag Football League started because of requests from his children's friends.

"My wife and I helped out with inner-city football in Greenfield to make a difference with kids who lived in the projects. Meanwhile, when we'd come home from volunteering our time there, our two sons would have friends over, and they asked us to get a league together," Pilardi said.

The league started last year with 190 kids from communities throughout the North Hills and as far away as Butler.

That number quickly doubled, and, now, Pilardi is expecting 400 kids ranging in ages from 6 to 13 play on the 10 teams in the league when it begins in October.

To appease the eager athletes during the summer, Pilardi decided to start dodgeball and kickball leagues. Ultimate Dodgeball for boys and girls ages 4 to 16 is set to start in late August. Kickball has been postponed until next year because of low interest.

The fee to play flag football is \$75. That price includes a football shirt, trophies that are given out to each player throughout the season, plus referee and insurance costs.

Other expenses, such as maintenance of the league's Web site, are covered by the sponsorship of North Hills businesses and the generosity of parents.

"Each child gets the chance to play in the games, which are held on Sundays at Tyler Park in Ross Township in the spring and at Ross Elementary School in the fall, and they each get a chance to get a trophy throughout the season," Pilardi said.

"We want to make sure that every child feels special and appreciated. Parents and kids appreciate that."

Jean Frye sure does.

"The organization is like a big family," said Frye, a Ross resident who takes pictures for the Backyard Flag Football League Web site. Her son, Wyatt, 12, has played in the league for four seasons.

"We all have a lot of respect for each other, and the kids play together and are supported and encouraged," she said.

"Being in the league boosts my confidence, and it feels great knowing that everyone knows what I did on the field," said Wyatt, who will be a North Hills Junior High School seventh-grader in the fall.

"The league has lived up to my expectations because I'm getting playing time on the field, and I wasn't when I was playing tackle football, and I have great coaches and teammates."

Since becoming a member of the Warriors team, Wyatt scored eight touchdowns last season, received a Player of the Week medal during the third week of play and helped his team make it to the championship this year. Despite a loss in that tournament, Wyatt is enjoying everything the league has to offer.

"I wasn't having any fun playing tackle football," he said. "I was doing all the practices and not getting any playing time. It was always the same people playing different positions, and I'd sit on the bench."