

TEXAS FOOTBALL COACHES LEAD THE NATION TOWARD TACKLING CERTIFICATION



CUSTOMER STORY

OVERVIEW

The Texas High School Coaches Association (THSCA) is the largest coaches association in the nation with approximately 23,000 members. Partnering with Atavus and the University Interscholastic League (UIL), THSCA launched a comprehensive tackling certification program for all high school football coaches and successfully certified thousands of coaches, putting into place a robust program designed to help coaches increase player safety.

CHALLENGE

As in many states across the United States, Texas saw declining participation in high school football. The THSCA attributed this in part due to the increased number of news stories highlighting concerns over the safety of the sport for young people. Football is central to many communities in Texas, and, more importantly, the sport teaches young men values that they carry with them their entire lives. Fear about the sport's safety was keeping young men from benefiting from these values.

SOLUTION

With declining participation and fears over safety, THSCA was determined to take action to protect players and save the game. In spring 2018, the state's governing body, the UIL Legislative Council, announced mandatory tackling certification for coaches. In cooperation with UIL, THSCA became the first state in the country to require all football coaches to successfully complete tackling certification.



HIGHLIGHTS

- All high school football coaches required to be certified
- Exceeded goal for number of coaches earning certification at first-ever exam
- Post-event survey showed high satisfaction among coaches attending certification presentations



“Atavus has proven itself to be a trusted partner in helping move the game forward with safer tackling.”

- Joe Martin, Executive Director, THSCA

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“The game is changing, and we have to be willing to change with it,” said D.W. Rutledge, Executive Director of the Texas High School Coaches Association. “By implementing a mandatory tackling certification, we’re continuing our legacy in Texas as leaders in high school football and taking necessary steps to move the game forward. Preventing injuries is paramount for all coaches and players, and we felt that as an organization it was our duty to seek out the best possible solutions to keeping our players safe.”

With tens of thousands of coaches needing certification by August 1, 2019, the THSCA and UIL approached Atavus to help implement a certification program. They aimed to launch during the 2018 annual Coaching School conference in July 2018, less than four months later.

In order to ensure that all coaches would be certified by the August 2019 deadline, together, THSCA, UIL and Atavus decided to certify a few thousand coaches at that time, while putting into place additional certification opportunities over the next 11 months leading up to the deadline.

RESULTS

Atavus immediately went to work developing an intensive presentation and assessment designed to help high school coaches learn the Atavus Tackling System, which uses a rugby-style, shoulder-led technique that is both fundamentally sound and safer. Unlike the most common technique that requires the player to use the head as part of the tackle, Atavus moves the head to the side and out of the tackle. The force of the tackle is absorbed by the body instead of the head.

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At the event, attendees quickly snatched up all 4,000 seats for the Atavus presentations, making the trainings a sell-out. The 13,552 attendees at Coaching School was a record for the event, a result that THSCA credited to the tackling presentation. Atavus offered four lectures on the final day of Coaching School, each followed by a multiple-page test designed to prove a coach's mastery of the material.

Within 10 days, all tested coaches received their results following validation by Dr. Art Maerlender, Associate Director for the Center for Brain, Biology, & Behavior (CB3), a leading authority on brain injuries in sports and an Atavus advisor. THSCA and the UIL were delighted by the number of coaches earning their first-ever certification, exceeding the completion goals set for the event.

Atavus didn't stop there. Beyond the 2018 Coaching School, additional in-person sessions were scheduled for Championship weekend, and a series of clinics in January and February. With an online certification option, too, Atavus delivered systems that provide ample opportunities for coaches to complete certification and renew it every two years, per the UIL requirements. Additionally, each coach who successfully completed certification received access to Atavus' Digital Coaching Academy, a repository for drill videos, coaching points, and printable drill sheets.

In a post-training survey, over half the attendees (56.7%) described the presentation in a voluntary, free-form section as being professional, well organized, or informative. **"We are proud to be leading the way for the next generation of football players,"** said Martin. **"Atavus has proven itself to be a trusted partner in helping move the game forward with safer tackling."**

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*- Joe Martin,
Executive Director - THSCA*



ABOUT ATAVUS

ATAVUS combines analytics and world class coaching philosophy to measure and improve the performance of players, coaches, and teams. Located in Seattle, Atavus partners with local and national agencies to create more effective and safer contact sports.