



Meriden Raiders Junior Football, Cheer and Dance League

Washington Park | P.O. Box 4029 Meriden CT 06450 | 203-262-4250 |
meridenraiders@yahoo.com | www.meridenraiders.org

2021 Athletic Season Parent and Athlete Handbook

Welcome

Welcome to the Meriden Raiders Football, Cheer and Dance League. This handbook was developed to provide important and useful information we hope to be beneficial throughout the year. In developing it, we have set a goal for communicating with you about the league, games and the philosophies of our program.

We are a volunteer organization. Some of us are parents of players, some are not. All of us are committed to assisting in the growth of your youth through the teaching of discipline, skills, safety and competitiveness in football, cheerleading and dance while having fun.

This program does not work without active involvement from our parents. We need your help to assist with the many details and tasks that go into a successful season. Your support on game days, fundraising events and volunteering are important to the league and allow you to be a part of your child's Meriden Raiders experience. Please take the time to read this handbook together with your child/children and don't hesitate to ask any board member or coach about any of the content that is not clear.

Win or lose, working together we can all be winners and have fun.

Sincerely

,

Meriden Raiders Board of Directors

2021 Board of Directors

Executive Officers:

President Lovette "Lovie" Watson

Vice President 1 Michael Reed

Vice President 2 Athena White-Preston

Treasurer Shirley Bradley

Secretary Keyona Dyson

Cheer Coordinator Ashley Pagano

Football Coordinator Brandon Preston

General Board Members:

Equipment Manager: Donta Webb

Concession Stand Coordinators: Filomena Simmons

Fundraising Coordinators: Amanda Murdock

Football Head Coaches: 13U Ed Waters | 12U Orlando Valentin | 11U Dan Lewinson | 10U Shawn Shelton | 9U Angeles Lewis | 8U Jason Davis

Cheer/Dance/Step Head Coaches: Dance Dominique Jones | 14U Amanda Murdock | 12U TBD | 10U Cheryl Pedalino | 8U Ashley Pagano

From Your Coaches

We are happy to welcome all players and parents to the Meriden Raiders Youth Football, Cheer and Dance Program. We are hopeful that this will be the most exciting and rewarding season you've ever experienced! Our goal is to develop well-rounded young men and women who learn not only the fundamentals of football, cheer and dance, but also the importance of education and teamwork, in an atmosphere conducive to developing a sound mind, body and character all while having a good time. We practice the ideals of sportsmanship, scholarship and physical fitness. Our program stresses learning lessons of value far beyond the playing days, such as self-discipline, teamwork, concentration, friendship, leadership, and good sportsmanship. We as coaches, will do our very best to ensure that each player is utilized to his/her best potential and their talents are used for the team's best advantage. Safety is our top concern. Many of the exercises, drills, and team rules are there to insure your child is physically and mentally fit. Each child is unique and will develop at his/her own pace. We will exercise their bodies and minds in an effort to develop the skills needed to execute their sport.

Traits of a Good Football Player

Desire: Desire is a state of mind, an abandonment of self, a form of courage and the joy of mixing it up. It is doing one's best, calling up whatever reserve power is available and never quitting. It is playing both for oneself and for the team's interest. We as coaches firmly believe that the size of the heart is more important than the size of the body. Desire is 100%, 100% of the time.

Confidence: The belief that one can do what he has been asked to do. Football is a sport that builds it. The coaches will get loud often, kind of like the military, but the idea is not to humiliate or hurt the players, it's to get the kids to wake up to realize that they are part of a team and their actions affect their teammates. Most kids will get yelled at and be upset by it. Parents will be worried by it and begin to feel protective. The coach is just trying to motivate the player, to toughen them up, to prepare them and to get them excited enough to put forth the effort needed to play football. A player, who is doing their own thing, talking or not paying attention while the coaches are teaching, is risking possible injury to himself or a teammate and is setting himself up for failure. "Discipline is something you do *for* someone, not *to* them"

The love of the game: This is an important part of any football player. A good football player enjoys the competition of a depth chart and is willing to work their way up the ladder to starter. They have the willingness to play any position. They have the motivation to learn the play and be responsible to their teammates.

Traits of a Good Cheerleader

Purpose: To demonstrate, promote community spirit and encourage good sportsmanship.

To promote crowd involvement using positive leadership skills and to help achieve a respectful reputation with other communities.

The Meriden Raiders Cheerleading teams support the Meriden Raiders Jr. Football teams by demonstrating spirit and getting the fan excited to follow the game. Demonstrating spirit includes cheers, chants, and halftime routines.

Benefits:

- Leadership Development
- Increase self-confidence
- Self-control, self-discipline, respect for self and others
- Community awareness
- Develops sports knowledge and appreciation
- Learning Responsibility
- Physical fitness, coordination and athletic skill

Affiliations and Requirements

Local Conference Membership:

Connecticut Youth Football & Cheer and Cheer(AYC) Conference
www.ctyfc.org

National Membership Affiliation:

American Youth Football (AYF)
www.americanyouthfootball.com

AYF divisional ages/age protected explanation

For Football, play consists of an eight game schedule, generally starting the last weekend of August. The top four teams in each division, with the exception of 8U football, qualify for playoffs and are paired as follows; 1 vs.2 and 3 vs. 4. Winners advance to the state Division 1 & 2 championship games.

All champions are entered into the AYF New England Regional playoff system, which includes other American Youth Football Conferences in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Maine. Games consist of a quarter final, semi final and championship rounds. Winners of the New England Regional championship games advance to the American Youth Football & Cheer National Championships located in Kissimmee, Florida.

Cheer and Dance competitions consist of placing in the top three to advance from locals to state. When at states the team must place in the top three to advance to regionals. When at regionals the team must place in the top three to advance to the national championship located in Florida.

[PLEASE NOTE] Advancing to the finals will require additional financial commitment from participants.

First Aid Policy

Each town must insure that emergency medical personnel are present for duty at the start of and throughout each game. The cost of an athletic trainer or EMT is paid for by the host team. Insurance /accident coverage is provided by the CTYFC on a “primary excess” basis, which means the players' family insurance must first be exhausted. The premium per team is paid for by each individual member town.

Required Documents

Parents must provide a copy of an **original** birth certificate (with a raised seal) and the current end of year report card. Birth certificates will be retained by the Meriden Raiders and returned at the conclusion of the season. Birth Certificates and report cards will be returned to the parent at the end of conference certification.

All registering players will have a medical clearance form in the registration packet. This form must be completed, signed and stamped by your physician and returned before an athlete can actively participate.. An athlete, will not be allowed to

practice unless the medical clearance form has been received.

Each athlete will also be required to sign a code of conduct form along with his or her parents or guardian in order to participate.

Refunds: There will be no refund if your child decides to quit after the first week of practice.

Equipment

The value of this asset is estimated at over \$50,000. Failure to return the equipment will result in the parent being invoiced for the value of the equipment.

FOOTBALL: All football players will be able to practice in full equipment once their 10 hours of preseason conditioning requirements have been met which includes receipt of their medical clearance form.

Each player is required to personally supply the following equipment in order to play football safely:

- Mouthpiece (for sale in our concession stands for \$1). Custom mouthguards, if preferred, made by the dentists, must attach to the helmet face guard
- Athletic supporter with protective cup
- Socks of calf or knee length in the designated color identified by their coach
- Labeled water jug containing water or a sports drink such as Gatorade **NOTE:** water and Gatorade are acceptable for practices, only water is allowed on any turf fields
- Cleats, shoes must not have detachable cleats

Players will be issued the following equipment from the Meriden Raiders League:

- Helmet with face mask and chin strap
- One Mouth guard
- Shoulder pads
- Pants with hip, thigh and knee pads
- In some cases, game pants

This equipment must be returned to the football program at the season's end or parents will be billed for replacement equipment.

CHEER and DANCE: Each athlete will personally be responsible for their practice uniforms which will consist of:

- Black Shorts, Plain tee shirt.
 - Cheer tee shirts, athletic leggings and athletic shorts are acceptable. Thin tank tops or sport bras are not acceptable.
- Hair must be tied back of the face
- No makeup
- No jewelry of any kind is to be worn
- Fingernails are to be kept at athletic length or shorter (not beyond fingertip)
- Cheer shoes must be worn at all practices.

In the event the Practice Uniform guidelines are not met, the athlete will sit out until the issue is resolved and receive a warning. After three (3) offenses, the athlete will not participate in the next game's halftime routine.

Cheer Uniforms:

Each athlete will receive two uniforms from the Meriden Raiders League that will need to be returned at the end of the season.

It is the athlete's responsibility to clean and keep the uniforms in good condition. Athletes will only keep Game uniforms during the season. Competition uniforms will be given out at competition and collected immediately after competing. The Head Coach will have Competition uniforms.

Any uniform not returned will be the parent/guardian's financial responsibility to the league. Failure to meet this responsibility will result in the non-participating for the team in the future.

Raiders apparel as well as team shirts, sweatshirts for purchase. You may visit www.SouthingtonTheAthelticShop.com/Meriden-Raiders-Cheer/ for all Raiders appeal as well as anything for the Uniform (Mid-Drift Top, Bloomers, Shoes, Warm-up Jacket & Pants, and more)..

Athlete Expectations

- Keep up with your schoolwork. Poor grades in school and not completing homework will result in disciplinary actions by the coaches.
- Come to practice prepared to work and play. Arrive on time for practices and games. For example, 5:30 PM means you are on the field and in position at 5:30 PM, so you must be a few minutes early. Basically, a 5:30 PM practice begins at 5:25 PM
- If you don't practice, you don't participate.. All excused absences must be coordinated with the coaches.
 - Football has a minimum play rule. However, if you don't make an effort to attend practices, we as coaches are not required to play you. Generally, 1 missed practice will result in a missed quarter of that week's game unless the absence is excused.
 - Cheer and Dance: More than three (3) unexcused absences from practice will result in sitting out of a game halftime routine or competition. Tardiness will not be tolerated. Three late arrivals, greater than ten (10) minutes, will be considered as one (1) unexcused absence.
- What the coaches say goes. Back talking, profanity, bad attitudes, not completing drills or any form of disrespect will result in disciplinary action. This type of behavior will not be tolerated. Your child will be asked to leave the field with their parent/guardian.
- Respect other athletes on and off field. Remember, your teammates are working with you, not against you. Any unnecessary aggression or violence towards another player will result in disciplinary actions.
- Take care of your equipment and uniforms. Let the coaches know if your equipment or uniforms need to be repaired. This is key to safety.
- For Football:
 - During the first few weeks of practice, the coaches will evaluate and decide the best position for each player.
 - Wear your mouthpiece when required and keep a spare. On game day, if a player draws a safety penalty for not having a mouthpiece in, there will be consequences.
 - Learn the rules of the game. Remember especially the safety rules. Players who dropped flags for unsportsmanlike conduct, clipping, late hits, or other serious safety violations will have

- consequences.
- Know the name of each position and understand your position.
- For Cheer and Dance
 - Cheerleaders are to arrive half-hour (½) prior to the start of the game to warm up.
 - Athletes are responsible for getting transportation to and from games, both home and away.
 - Every team member must be dressed in full uniform as directed by coaches.
 - Hair is to be tied back off the face. Absolutely no jewelry of any kind is to be worn.
 - Bring plenty of water and water only; other drinks may stain the uniform.
 - During games, cheerleaders are to stay together and with the coach, unless permission is given to go otherwise.
 - The coaches are to be notified of the arrival of the parent/guardian prior to the athlete leaving at the end of the game.
 - For safety reasons, stunting will not be performed if the field is wet; however, we will be cheering in the rain. A clear raincoat will be provided.
- Every week practices are different. New skills are learned, problem areas are corrected, new plays, steps and routines are taught. Your child will be at a disadvantage by not making practice on time and regularly. Your head coach will provide you with days/times that they will conduct practice. It is generally five days a week until school starts. Once school is in session, practices are held three/four days per week with a game day either Saturday or Sunday.
- **Home Conditioning**
 - Proper nutrition and hydration is very important to a young athlete. Athletes need to drink as much water as possible every day; at least 4 to 6 glasses. Heat stroke is always a danger despite cooler weather during fall, so it is very important to stay hydrated at all times. It is also recommended that athletes layer under their uniforms to help keep them warm during the colder practices and games. Athletes need a high carbohydrate diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables and fewer fats and sugars. Please encourage healthy eating habits in your athletes not only during the sports season but the off season as well.

Disciplinary actions

Football:

Running is an everyday part of practice. On those few occasions when it is necessary to discipline a player from minor infraction, like failing to pay attention or talking while the coaches are talking, the player may be asked to run additional laps, do push-ups or perform another exercise. Normally, that will be the end of disciplinary action. A player will be asked to leave practices early for more severe incidents (i.e. fighting or profanity). If a parent is not present the player will be supervised until the child is picked up. The last resort is to use game suspensions. Coaches will use each of these sparingly. With such a high caliber of kids, severe disciplinary problems are not expected to be a problem on any team.

Cheer and Dance:

Meriden Raider Cheerleaders, Parents, and Coaches will:

- Use appropriate language during practice, games and competitions
- Avoid using physical force in any way toward anyone
- No display of excessive and inappropriate levels of anger
- Don't do anything to harm the reputation of the Meriden Raiders Football, Cheer, Dance & Step Program.
- Be Respectful towards the Meriden Raiders Coaches, Board Members and Cheerleaders as well as the opposing team's athletes and families.

If this code is violated the result will be as following:

- 1st Offense: Benched (must attend) from the halftime routine
- 2nd Offense: Removal of Competition
- 3rd Offense: Removal of program with no refund

Winning

Nothing in life, including football cheer or dance, is worthwhile unless you enjoy it and gain something from the experience. Sure, we are trying to win football games and we are going to set our goals high, but it shouldn't ruin our lives if we lose. Our teams should not believe that a loss is a tragedy. All you can ask of our kids is to do their best. If we win, great! If we lose, it's not the end of the world. There will be another game or competition. Coaches that think only of winning don't belong with the Meriden Raiders. Try this: ask your child if they had a good time instead of if they won or lost. By the same token, we feel that we owe it to the athletes to do everything we can to make

them winners. We plan to win every game or competition because if you don't, then you need to ask yourself which game or competition you plan to lose and if you're planning to lose, then why show up or practice the week before? We are going to practice hard, we are going to play hard and our scores will reflect this.

Coaches

We view coaching as an awesome responsibility. Your coaches will:

- Get the athletes in shape
- Understand each athletes potential
- Work on individual skills applicable to the routine or position
- Work on team execution of plays, stunts and routines
- Motivate, communicate, and lead
- Perform the behind the scenes work that will give the athletes the maximum chance of success, like researching our opponents and doing necessary scouting.
- Teach the athletes the skills they need to play football, cheer and dance safely.
- Explain what is required
- Demonstrate the technique
- Have the player perform the technique
- Explain the consequences of not performing the technique properly

Parents

Parents are as important to the success of the team as the athletes. Coaches and parents must work together. Please keep the coaches informed about problems that may be going on with your child. If the child has been sick, taking medication or going through some emotional trauma, please make sure the coaches are made aware of the problems as soon as possible. Parents and coaches must communicate with mutual respect. Parents and coaches reserve the right to postpone conversations that are getting out of hand. Heated discussions have no place in front of the players. Although many parents have coaching experience and may have played on a higher level than the current coach of the team, the coaches must ask that you refrain from coaching your kids at home. These kids are being taught to play as a team, each athlete performing a set function that his teammates can rely on. A player who abandons the

team to do something their parents coached them to do is letting down the team, coaches and himself. They may cause himself or a teammate to be injured. If you have suggestions or ideas, please do not hesitate to present them to the coaches after any practice or call your head coach.

Volunteering:

Each family will be expected to volunteer at the snack bar during summer practices, concession or field duties during home games, or any other Meriden Raider event.

Fundraising

Fundraising is a huge part of the Meriden Raiders way to make money for the League, parent participation in this is essential. Funds are not just raised for the players travel expenses when they go to Nationals and other competitions but also for new equipment and uniforms, EMT's and Referees for the game as well as the upkeep of the field. Listed below are some of the expenses the League is required to pay during a Season.

Referees \$4,680

Electricity \$1,800

Security \$2,880

Trash \$1,482

Internet \$960

Propane \$300

Office Supplies \$250

EMT \$3,200

Reconditioning/ New Helmets
\$11,320

Fundraisers are held during and after the season to help achieve the monetary requirements needed to keep the Leagues running.

Sponsorship packages are available year round for those parents that would like

to give them to potential sponsors for the Football, Cheer and Dance League. Should the sponsor choose a \$300 or more sponsorship, your child's registration fee will be waived. There are different levels of sponsorship that are offered to businesses. Please see the Fundraising Coordinator for this information.

Pictures

Professional photography will be offered early on in the season for all squads. Purchases of individual and team photos are the responsibility of the parents.

Awards Banquet

The Meriden Raiders Annual Awards Banquet will be held in January. At the banquet, recognition is given to teams, coaches, sponsors and volunteers. When available, tickets can be purchased online. Cost per ticket is to be determined. The cost for players and cheerleaders is covered by the league.

Meriden Raiders Team Contract

READ CAREFULLY

Welcome to the Meriden Raiders Youth Football, Cheer and Dance. The Raider Board would like to welcome you to the Raider family, and make the transition into the league a pleasant experience. The league is composed of all volunteers and works best when many hands pitch in to help make game day and practices run efficiently.

Every household will be asked to volunteer at least once throughout the season, this is mandatory you will be given a few dates to choose from and that slot must be covered by yourself or some other adult in your place. If your volunteer slot is missed your child will miss the next scheduled game.

Meriden teams only send 9u and older down to Florida if they qualify to travel. Currently The Meriden Raiders bylaws only send 1st place teams from regionals. Depending on the amount of funds in the account, the league may pay for room accommodations for kids and coaches on the roster, the Universal night, one team meals, and ground transportation while in Florida. If your child team qualifies to go to Florida there will be an out of pocket expenses. These expenses will need to be covered by the family to get the child to Florida. This includes food while in Florida, except for the team meal. Depending on flight prices this can run anywhere from \$500-\$800. Fundraising is a big part of sustaining our league, and the more we fundraise the more we can alleviate out of pocket cost.

Before signing the contract below, you (both player and parent) should thoroughly weigh and consider the required commitment to this program. Any questions that you may have should be clearly answered before you make this commitment. Your signature indicates an understanding and acceptance of the rules outlined in this contract. Failure to abide by these rules will cause penalties and/or dismissal. We reserve the right to dismiss a participant at any time during the season for violating any of the policies outlined in this handbook.

My child has registered to play football with the MERIDEN RAIDERS PROGRAM during the 2020 season. I fully understand that overdue paperwork, balances and fees will prevent my child from being issued any equipment and from participating in team practices/games/scrimmages. I fully understand that my child must be present for practices and games; I have read and agree to the attendance policy. I give permission to the MERIDEN RAIDERS to use images of my child for purposes such as the MERIDEN RAIDERS Facebook pages, website and/or newspaper ads and for program development. I recognize the fact that football is an active, a contact sport and the risk of injury is possible. I give permission for MERIDEN RAIDERS staff to temporarily render minor first aid in case of any injury. I'm fully aware of and understand that all mandatory items must be purchased and have been informed of additional possible costs for competitions, travel, unreturned equipment etc. Finally, I fully understand that fundraising is MANDATORY.

I, the parent/guardian of the above named participant, do hereby give my approval for my child/ward to participate, and further assert that I have verified with my child's/wards' physician, and my opinion, my child/ward is physically fit and can participate without limitation in any and all Local, Regional, National, League/Conference, Association and team/squad activities, including transportation to and from the activities by a licensed driver. I acknowledge that I am fully aware of the potential dangers of participation in any sport and fully understand that participation in football, cheerleading, dance and/or step may result in serious injuries, paralysis, permanent disability, and/or death. Furthermore, I fully acknowledge and understand that protective equipment does not prevent all participant injuries.

Parent or Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Print Name _____ Participant Print Name: _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

I have read and understand this contract and commit myself 100% to the compliance of these rules and regulations for the 2020 Football season as outlined in this contract.