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## NEWS RELEASE

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Contacts: Steve Alic, USA Football, 317/489-4417, [salic@usafootball.com](mailto:salic@usafootball.com)  
Clare Graff, NFL, 212/450 2435, [clare.graff@nfl.com](mailto:clare.graff@nfl.com)

### **THREE CENTRAL ARKANSAS YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUES ADOPTING USA FOOTBALL'S HEADS UP FOOTBALL PROGRAM FOR 2013 SEASON**

*Little Rock native Reggie Swinton to serve as Heads Up Football Ambassador and work alongside leagues*

Three youth football leagues in Central Arkansas have committed to the future of youth football by adopting a new USA Football program dedicated to making the game better and safer. The Heads Up Football program ensures a positive youth football experience and advances player safety by providing leaguewide coaching education and teaching resources that benefit players, parents and coaches.

USA Football is the official youth development partner of the NFL and the league's 32 teams. These three youth leagues are among more than 700 youth football organizations nationwide that will incorporate Heads Up Football into its 2013 season.

Little Rock native and former NFL wide receiver **REGGIE SWINTON** will work alongside select area leagues throughout the 2013 season as a Heads Up Football Ambassador. Swinton played five NFL seasons with the Cowboys, Lions and Cardinals. He was the first player in Murray State University history to amass more than 1,000 yards receiving.

Participating league coaches will be trained in Heads Up Football techniques before leading their teams this season. All head coaches and assistant coaches will complete USA Football's accredited Level 1 Coach Certification Course, which includes Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concussion recognition and response protocols; proper helmet and shoulder pad fitting; and Heads Up Tackling techniques, which aim to take the head out of the line of contact.

Parents can help ensure their youth football players are participating in a better and safer brand of football by visiting [www.USAFootball.com](http://www.USAFootball.com), where they can enroll their leagues as Heads Up Football leagues and ensure that their coaches are certified.

Area leagues showing a commitment to players and coaches through Heads Up Football membership:

<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Arkansas AAU	Little Rock, Ark.
Central Arkansas Bengals	North Little Rock, Ark.
Life Champs Sports	Little Rock, Ark.

"The health and safety of every youth player is USA Football's No. 1 priority," USA Football Executive Director **SCOTT HALLENBECK** said. "These Central Arkansas leagues show exceptional dedication to their players, parents and coaches, and we are proud to have them be part of Heads Up Football. Each of them is committed to the highest standards of player safety and coaching education in all of youth sports."

Through Heads Up Football, each league will nominate a Player Safety Coaches to be trained by USA Football. Player Safety Coaches will evaluate and monitor Heads Up Football player safety protocols within the organization as well as work with league commissioners, coaches, parents and players throughout the season to provide on-site clinics and mentoring to ensure that coaching and player safety best practices are used.

Adopted in 2013 by youth leagues on a national level, Heads Up Football requires five primary elements:

<b>Heads Up Tackling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USA Football's Heads Up Tackling technique, endorsed by medical and football experts, teaches players to keep their heads up and out of the line of contact.</li> </ul>
<b>Concussion recognition and response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches learn and are assessed on CDC concussion recognition and response through USA Football's Level 1 Coaching Certification Course.</li> <li>• Coaches, parents and players are taught concussion-related protocols at the start of the season at a league-wide clinic and have them reinforced throughout the season.</li> </ul>
<b>Coaching education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All coaches within a youth program are trained to teach the game's fundamentals by completing USA Football's nationally accredited Level 1 Coaching Certification Course.</li> </ul>
<b>Equipment fitting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches, parents and players are taught proper helmet and shoulder pad fitting.</li> </ul>
<b>Player Safety Coach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointed by each participating Heads Up Football youth organization. This individual ensures compliance with Heads Up Football's player safety protocols, including coaching certification and conducting safety clinics for coaches, parents and players.</li> </ul>

USA Football's Heads Up Tackling technique was developed with contributions from USA Football's Tackle Advisory Committee, which includes Northwestern head coach **PAT FITZGERALD**, UCLA head coach **JIM MORA**, former NFL running back **MERRIL HOGE**, Miami Christopher Columbus High School head coach **CHRIS MERRITT** and sports psychologist **DR. DAVID YUKELSON**.

Learn more about Heads Up football at: [www.usafootball.com](http://www.usafootball.com).

**About USA Football:** USA Football, the sport's national governing body, leads the game's development, inspires participation and ensures a better and safer experience for all youth, high school and other amateur players. The independent nonprofit is the official youth football development partner of the NFL, its 32 teams and the NFL Players Association. USA Football manages U.S. national teams within the sport for international competitions and awards more than \$1 million annually in equipment grants and youth league volunteer background check subsidies. Endowed by the NFL and NFLPA in 2002, USA Football ([www.usafootball.com](http://www.usafootball.com)) is chaired by former NFL team executive Carl Peterson.