



**GOLDEN EMPIRE
YOUTH TACKLE FOOTBALL**

4308 Resnik Ct. Ste 208 Bakersfield, CA 93313 - P.O. Box 20472 Bakersfield, CA 93390
Office phone 661 837-4393 Office Fax 661 837- 4393

Date: 2/23/2026

Dear Golden Empire Youth Tackle Football and Cheer Parents, Participants, and Volunteers,

Golden Empire Youth Tackle Football and Cheer is committed to providing a safe, competitive, and development-focused experience for all athletes and families in our program. As part of that continued commitment, we are issuing formal notice of an important change to participant eligibility requirements beginning with the 2026 season.

Effective for the **2026 football and cheer season**, the league's official **Age Cut-Off Date** will change from:

November 15, 2026

to

July 1, 2026

This update will apply to **all youth tackle football and cheer participants** and will determine age-based division placement for the 2026 season and beyond.

Purpose of the Change:

The decision to adjust the age cut-off date was made to better align Golden Empire with current **National Youth Tackle Football and Cheer levels of play**, and to ensure our program is consistent with the eligibility standards being used across leagues and organizations throughout the region, state, and country.

This change provides stronger alignment in three key areas:

Regional Alignment:

Many youth football and cheer programs within our region already operate under a July 1 cut-off date. Aligning our eligibility structure with surrounding leagues improves consistency in scheduling, division structure, team placement, and competitive balance when participating in regional play and inter-league events.

State Alignment:

Across California, youth football and cheer organizations are continuing to standardize age and division guidelines. A July 1 cut-off date supports better coordination among state programs and

creates uniformity for teams participating in statewide competitions, invitational tournaments, and state championship pathways if applicable.

National Alignment:

National youth football and cheer standards widely utilize a July 1 cut-off date. Adopting this model positions Golden Empire within the mainstream structure of youth tackle football nationwide, improving eligibility clarity and ensuring our athletes are properly aligned for broader competitive opportunities.

AYF Alignment:

Golden Empire Youth Tackle Football and Cheer is proud to serve as an **Associate Member of AYF – American Youth Football and Cheer**. AYF has recently adopted the same **July 1, 2026, age cut-off date** for the 2026 season. Aligning our league with AYF standards ensures our athletes and cheer participants remain fully eligible for AYF-sanctioned regional and national events and competitive pathways if or when applicable.

Two-Year Pilot Program:

While alignment at the regional, state, and national levels is important, **our priority remains serving the local youth tackle football and cheer landscape first.**

For that reason, this age cut-off adjustment will be implemented as a **two-year pilot program beginning with the 2026 season**. During this period, league leadership will collect and evaluate real-time data, including:

- Participation numbers and division balance
- Competitive equity and safety indicators
- Retention and advancement trends
- Feedback from coaches, families, and volunteers

This evaluation period ensures that we are not only aligned regionally and nationally, but that the structure is truly benefiting and properly serving our local athletes and community.

At the conclusion of the pilot period, the Board will review all findings before confirming the long-term adoption of the July 1 age cut-off date.

Benefits to Our Athletes and Families

By adopting the July 1 cut-off date, Golden Empire strengthens the overall structure and long-term development of our program by providing:

- Clear and consistent age-based divisions
- Increased competitive balance
- Greater inter-league participation opportunities
- Expanded access to regional and state competition formats
- Eligibility and preparation for national-level events

Additional Information

We understand that eligibility changes may impact some families differently depending on a participant's birthdate and current division placement. Updated division charts, registration guidance, and additional clarification will be distributed well in advance of the 2026 season.

If you have immediate questions regarding how this change may affect your athlete, please contact league administration.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Golden Empire Youth Tackle Football and Cheer. Together, we remain focused on developing strong athletes, strong teams, and strong character while ensuring that our local youth remains our highest priority.

Sincerely,

Golden Empire Youth Tackle Football and Cheer

Board of Directors