



Welcome to the seventh edition of the New York Jets 2026 Girls Flag Football Weekly Recap. We're excited to share the latest initiatives and events that highlight our dedication to empowering young athletes and promoting inclusivity. From growing youth football to providing opportunities for disadvantaged populations, the Jets are dedicated to fostering a spirit of unity and support. Stay tuned for updates on the season.

New Jersey Sanctions Girls Flag Football as Varsity Sport

Earlier this week, in a landmark decision, the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) voted to officially sanction girls' flag football as a varsity high school sport statewide, beginning in the 2026–2027 school year. This long-awaited approval makes girls' flag football the 35th sanctioned sport in New Jersey high school athletics, a milestone achieved after a successful two-year pilot program and more than a decade of advocacy from the New York Jets. The vote represents a historic step for women's athletics in the Garden State, who will now have the same opportunity as boys to compete for scholastic championships in the sport of football.

The New York Jets' contributions were instrumental throughout this journey. Beginning in 2021, the Jets seeded New Jersey's first girls' high school flag league with the Super Football Conference, providing funding, equipment, and organizational support to get it off the ground. What started with eight pioneering schools in one conference quickly blossomed: by 2023, more than 100 schools in New Jersey were participating at the club or pilot level, and by 2025 over 140 high schools fielded girls' flag teams statewide. As of today, there are approximately 4,200 girls playing the sport in New Jersey.

Jets-supported conferences across North and Central Jersey experienced explosive growth in participation, marked by media days, tournaments, and state championship games at venues such as MetLife Stadium, Atlantic Health Jets Training Center, and Kean University. These efforts not only highlighted the enthusiasm for girls' football but built a compelling case for official sanctioning as a varsity sport.

THE PATHWAY FROM SCHOOLYARDS TO THE PROS

YOUTH Ages 8-15: Youth & middle school programs, UK & Dublin Flag	HIGH SCHOOL PSAL, New York, New Jersey	CLUB 14U, 18U, UK	COLLEGE Intercollegiate: Jets ECAC Women's Flag League	NATIONAL TEAM 15U: 3 Jets Flag Elite Players	OLYMPICS LA28 Olympic Sport Debut	PRO LEAGUE NFL + TMRW Sports Pro Flag League

The impact of the Jets' commitment extends beyond New Jersey's borders. Leading the effort in New York City since 2011 with the founding of a high school girls flag football league in the Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL), the Jets girls' football advocacy helped New York State sanction varsity flag football in 2024. The club has even launched programs internationally - including the UK and Ireland's first girls' NFL flag league and to foster elite competition. In total, the New York Jets have helped establish more than 260 girls' flag teams across three countries in the sport to date while engaging over 7,000 young women annually. This broad effort, backed by upwards of \$3.5 million in funding and grants from the Jets and the Betty Wold Johnson Foundation, underscores the franchise's unique role as a leader in growing football opportunities for young girls.



Marymount Takes Home “The Betty” at the ECAC Championship

Over the weekend, the New York Jets welcomed the top eight teams from the inaugural ECAC Women's Flag Football League season to the Atlantic Health Jets Training Facility for the league's first-ever championship tournament. The teams competed in a bracket-style postseason, culminating in Marymount's 37-26 victory over Franciscan in Sunday's championship game to claim “The Betty.”

The league's championship trophy, “The Betty,” is named in honor of philanthropist Betty Wold Johnson and celebrates her enduring legacy of service, education, and community impact. Marymount's Jesenia Velez was named Tournament MVP following a standout performance throughout the weekend, highlighting a championship that showcased elite talent and competitive balance across the field.

Launched in March following a \$1 million commitment from the Betty Wold Johnson Foundation, the Jets ECAC Women's Flag Football League features 15 founding programs across seven states and stands as the nation's largest collegiate women's flag football league. The inaugural season concluded with a championship weekend that highlighted the league's rapid growth and momentum, with expansion expected in 2027 as the Jets and ECAC continue to invest in and elevate the game of women's flag football.

For more information about the league and its inaugural season, please click [HERE](#).



Marymount celebrates with “The Betty” after defeating Franciscan, 37-26, to capture the inaugural ECAC Women's Flag Football Championship



Jesenia Velez was awarded ECAC Women's Flag Football Championship MVP after helping lead Marymount to the championship





Kaelynn Hester Named Jets High School Girls Flag Player of the Week Presented By Gatorade



Kaelynn Hester of North Plainfield High School in North Plainfield, NJ, has been named this week's New York Jets High School Girls Flag Football Player of the Week presented by Gatorade. In its fourth year, this award is presented to standout girls flag players in the tri-state area. The Jets and Gatorade will recognize players throughout the season from a series of games hosted at the Atlantic Health Jets Training Center, in addition to games played throughout the tri-state.

During a high-stakes BCC divisional matchup, Hester was the difference-maker in the Canucks' 6-0 win over Westfield High School. The senior WR/DB had instrumental plays on both sides of the ball, recording a touchdown, 4 receptions for 61 yards, 5 flag pulls and 3 interceptions. Her third pick sealed the game for the Canucks during a Westfield drive down the field in the final minutes. North Plainfield is currently 6-1 on the season, and looks to add two more wins this week during their final games of the regular season.

As the New York Jets Girls Flag Football Player of the Week presented by Gatorade, Hester will receive a \$1,000 donation to be used toward North Plainfield's Girls Flag Football program. In addition to the monetary award, she is invited to attend the Jets Play Football preseason game at MetLife Stadium, where she will be honored on-field for her achievement.

Julianna Burns Named Jets High School Girls Flag Coach of the Week

Julianna Burns of Sayreville War Memorial High School in Sayreville, NJ, has been named this week's New York Jets Girls Flag High School Coach of the Week. Coach Burns will receive a \$1,000 donation to benefit Sayreville's flag football program. Along with the monetary award, she will be honored on-field at MetLife Stadium during the Jets Play Football preseason game.



In its fourth year, the Jets Girls Flag High School Coach of the Week award is given to a coach in the tri-state area who serves the best interests of the game through the teaching of sound football fundamentals, the motivation of young players to achieve, and the promotion of youth football by way of dedication to their community, their school, and their student-athletes.

In her first year as head coach, Burns has led Sayreville's program to a remarkable turnaround. Appointed just two weeks before the start of the 2026 season, she inherited a program that had just one win the previous year—she has since coached the Bombers to an 8-0 record and the BCC Silver Division title. Sayreville's most recent win came in a 6-0 victory over a strong Union team, putting the Bombers in the rankings as currently one of the top teams in New Jersey.

A Sayreville native, Burns attended Sayreville War Memorial High School. She continued her education at Kean University, where she studied early childhood education with a focus on students with disabilities. Burns also played Division 3 soccer for the Cougars. Burns is now in her 10th year teaching in the Sayreville Public School system, and also coaches junior varsity girls soccer and basketball at her alma mater, in addition to her role with girls flag. Burns and the Bombers look to remain undefeated when they take on Hunterdon Central this Friday at 5pm.

