

The League

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THE LEAGUE

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League History

HISTORY OF THE NEW ENGLAND FOOTBALL LEAGUE

The N.E.F.L. was founded in 1994 by League President and Director of Marketing, Tom Torrisi, Chairman Matt Brien, Commissioner Bob Oreal, Vice-President and Treasurer John Motta and Secretary Christine Torrisi. In its inaugural season, the league consisted of only four teams, the Lawrence Lightning, the Greater Lawrence Grizzlies, the Rockingham Reapers and the Haverhill Rage. All the games were played on one practice field and each team had only between 22 - 25 players on their roster. The first year, however, was a success because the league was built on a solid foundation. Each team had sponsorship from local area businesses and the league had adopted a stringent set of rules, regulations and bylaws that kept everything on and off the field highly organized. All game officials were certified Eastern Mass. high school officials and all rules were strictly enforced right down to the uniform rule. It was these things that gave the N.E.F.L. credibility and allowed for media coverage by local newspapers. The Lawrence Lightning became the leagues first champions by defeating the Haverhill Rage. In 1995, the N.E.F.L. expanded by two teams, the Baystate Bulldogs, another team representing the Greater Lawrence area and the Boston Bandits from Greater Boston. The league now had its first team from outside of the Merrimack Valley. The Lawrence Lightning moved to Methuen to become the Essex County Sharks, the Rockingham Reapers changed their name to the Cougars, and the Haverhill Rage relocated to Hampton, NH to become the Seacoast Rage. The league also joined the AFA and each teams roster grew to between 30 - 35 players. The league also signed its first radio contract and had the N.E.F.L. game of the week broadcast each Monday night on WCCM radio in Lawrence, MA. The second year had been even more successful than anyone had hoped and the Seacoast Rage defeated the Rockingham Cougars to become champions of the N.E.F.L. for 1995. The 1996 campaign saw the N.E.F.L. undertake its largest expansion to date. The Merrimack Valley Vipers, the Middlesex County Seminoles, the Eastern Mass. Mavericks, the Massachusetts Havoc and the Southern Maine Spartans became the five newest members of the league. The Greater Lawrence Grizzlies folded after the 1995 season. The N.E.F.L. now had ten teams with a Northern and Southern division. Four of the five new teams were successful and made the playoffs. It was the Massachusetts Havoc, however, that took home the N.E.F.L. championship by upsetting the previously undefeated Eastern Mass. Mavericks and end a third successful year for the league. 1997 had yet three more new teams enter the N.E.F.L. The Rhode Island Rhinos, the South Shore Stars and the Greater Haverhill Highlanders were added which made for a strong and competitive twelve team league. The Southern Maine Spartans left the N.E.F.L. in 1997 to join the new Maine State Football League. The N.E.F.L. expanded the rosters to 40 players to accommodate the growing interest. For the first time, the league would have a two time winner. The Seacoast Rage, winners of the N.E.F.L. Northern Division, playing in their third championship game, would be going against the defending champion, Massachusetts Havoc, winners of the N.E.F.L. Southern Division. The Massachusetts Havoc became the first team in league history to not only win two championships but win them back to back. The Havoc then went on to become the first ever winners of the North Atlantic Football Federation in the inaugural Harvest Bowl when they defeated the Central Maine Storm of the Maine State Football League. The 1998 season opened with the Greater Lowell Nor'easter replacing the defunct Seacoast Rage and the Rhode Island Gridiron taking the place of the Merrimack Valley Vipers, who took a one year leave of absence to reorganize. 1998 was another exciting and successful season for the N.E.F.L. The Greater Lowell Nor'easter, Northern Division Champions, defeated the Southern Division Champion Tri-boro Rhinos to win the N.E.F.L. championship. The Nor'easter then went on to defeat the Central Maine Storm of the Maine State Football League in the first round of the N.A.F.F. playoffs. The Ironquoit Sting, champions of the New York Football League (NYFL) traveled to Massachusetts to play the Nor'easter for the second annual N.A.F.F. double AA national championship Harvest Bowl. Greater Lowell defeated Ironquoit and became the N.E.F.L.'s second national champion in two years. The 1999 season saw the return of the former Merrimack Valley Vipers to the league as the Lawrence Lightning, and the Essex County Sharks merged with the Greater Haverhill Highlanders. Although the Rhode Island Gridiron and Middlesex County Seminoles folded due to financial problems, the Quincy Granite became the newest members of the N.E.F.L. and were tremendously successful, finishing second behind

the Massachusetts Havoc in the southern division. Each team's roster limit was increased to fifty players in 1999 due to greater participation. The Greater Lowell Nor'easter won their second straight N.E.F.L. title by defeating the Massachusetts Havoc in a championship game that featured two of the top AA teams in New England. The Nor'easter then defeated the Buffalo Gladiators, title winners of the New York Amateur Football League (NYAFL), for their second straight AA national title in the annual Harvest Bowl. Minor League Football News also named the New England Football League "AA League of the Year" in 1999 and awarded it with the privilege of hosting the annual "Free Agent Scouting Combine All-Star Game" in 2000. This game featured the best National Minor League All-Stars in the United States playing the New England Football League All-Stars on , May 20 at Cawley Stadium in Lowell, MA. The game was an overwhelming success with the N.E.F.L. All-Stars defeating the National Minor League All-Stars. The dawn of the new millennium brought new challenges and opportunities to the N.E.F.L. The North Atlantic Football Federation changed its name to the North American Football Association (N.A.F.A.) and became a member of the National Football Alliance (N.F.A.), which sponsors a national tournament that brings the best teams from the United States and Canada together to determine a national champion. Expansion into Maine and New Hampshire saw the N.E.F.L.'s roster of teams grow to fourteen and a second conference, the North Atlantic Conference, was added. The Seacoast Hawks from Portsmouth, NH, the Southern Maine Raging Bulls, the York County Warchiefs, the Beachside Tomcats from Old Orchard Beach, ME, the Granite State Rebels from Manchester, NH and the Nashua Predators comprised two very strong divisions, the inland and coastal, with the Seacoast Hawks winning the North Atlantic Conference championship. 2000 also brought the merger of the Lawrence Lightning with the Greater Haverhill Highlanders and the Rockingham Cougars with the Eastern Mass. Mavericks. The Bellingham Minutemen, headed by former New England Patriots, Steve Grogan, Ronnie Lippett and Mosi Tatupu, also joined the N.E.F.L. The Baystate Bulldogs changed their name to the Commonwealth Cavalry and the Mass. Havoc and Quincy Granite dropped out of the league. The Greater Lowell Nor'easter became the first team in the history of the N.E.F.L. to win three consecutive championships by again defeating the Tri-Boro Rhinos in a rematch of the N.E.F.L.'s 1998 championship game. Unfortunately, the Nor'easter were unable to defend their N.A.F.A. title when this time, they were defeated by the Buffalo Gladiators, champions of the N.Y.A.F.L., in a rematch of last year's Harvest Bowl. In 2001, the N.E.F.L. expanded into Vermont with the Ice Storm and added another team from the state of Maine, the Western Maine Rolling Thunder. The Eastern Mass. Mavericks folded due to financial reasons, the Commonwealth Cavalry, under new management, changed its name to the Leominster Razorbacks and the Tri-Boro Rhinos took a one year leave of absence to reorganize to bring the total number of teams in the N.E.F.L. to fifteen. The Boston Bandits, the league's oldest member, defeated defending three time league champion, the Greater Lowell Nor'easter, for their first New England Football League title. The Nor'easter would exact their revenge in the first round of the N.A.F.A. playoffs as they rebounded and defeated the Bandits for a return trip to the N.A.F.A. Championship Game. The Nor'easter went on to face the Buffalo Gladiators for the third time in three years, this time traveling to Buffalo for the Harvest Bowl. For the second time in two years, the Nor'easter came up just short as they were once again defeated by the Gladiators. The Southern Maine Raging Bulls became champions of the North Atlantic Conference when they defeated the expansion Vermont Ice Storm, a team that had a very successful first year. 2002 witnessed the N.E.F.L. become the first league in the country to accommodate teams at three different skill levels in three conferences, in addition to adding three new teams: the Monadnock Marauders, the Western Mass. Wolverines and the Connecticut Thunder. The Tri-Boro Rhinos made their return to the league and the Western Maine Rolling Thunder, under new management, was now the Notre Dame Cobras, bringing the total number of teams in the N.E.F.L. to nineteen, encompassing all six New England states. Our Maritime Conference (A) had the first year Connecticut Thunder win the championship, defeating the York County (ME) Warchiefs in the new conference's first ever title game. The North Atlantic Conference (AA) saw the Vermont Ice Storm playing in its second championship game in as many years, defeat the New England Stars for their first championship. The N.E.F.L.'s marquee Colonial Conference (AAA) featured the Boston Bandits and the Greater Lowell Nor'easter play in a rematch of the 2001 finals. This time, the Nor'easter defeated the Bandits in the N.E.F.L.'s first ever overtime championship game and claim their fourth N.E.F.L. title. Greater Lowell then went on to capture its third N.A.F.A. national championship title when they defeated the Brooklyn Mariners in Harvest Bowl IV. In 2003, the New England Football League undertook its largest expansion since the 1996 season. Four new teams joined the N.E.F.L. The South Shore Outlaws became the newest entry into the (AA) North Atlantic Conference and the Central Maine Shockers, Penobscot Seadragons and Maine Blizzard were placed in the (A) Maritime Conference. The Greater Haverhill Highlanders, under new team management, changed their name to the Merrimack Valley Crush. The Seacoast Hawks defeated the Maine Tomcats to become N.E.F.L. (A) Maritime Conference champions, and the New England Stars defeated the Connecticut Thunder to become champions of the N.E.F.L. (AA) North Atlantic Conference. The (AAA) Colonial Conference saw two long time rivals battle it out in the championship game for a third time when the Boston Bandits played the Greater Lowell Nor'easter. The Bandits beat the Nor'easter for their second league title in three years. The Bandits and the Nor'easter, along with the Crush, were all unfortunately defeated in the first round of the N.A.F.A. play-offs with the Bandits losing to the eventual National Champion, Brooklyn Mariners, and the Nor'easter losing to the runner-up, Ironquoit Sting. The Maine Blizzard left the league at the end of the 2003 season. The 2004 season saw four more new teams enter the league, the Worcester County Wildcats, and the Massachusetts State Warriors based out of Holyoke, MA became the two latest (AA) entries into the North Atlantic Conference, and the Mid Coast Chaos from Maine and the Southern Rhode Island Raptors were the two newest entries into our (A) Maritime Conference. The New England Stars decided to leave the NFL and still maintain a great flag football team in the BEFL (BOSTON ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE). They were replaced with a new franchise called the New England Bolts. Once again the Greater Lowell Nor'easter took home the championship trophy in the Colonial Conference making it number five, defeating the Leominster Razorbacks.

In the North Atlantic Conference, the Connecticut Thunder beat the Vermont Ice Storm for their first (AA) title. The Maritime Conference, in a game for the ages, saw the Hampton Hurricanes defeat the Central Maine Shockers in overtime for Hampton's first championship. The Greater Lowell Nor'easter and the Connecticut Thunder both advanced to the semi-final and quarter final rounds of the N.A.F.A. tournament respectively, but unfortunately, both teams came up just short in those regional play-off games. This was a tremendous accomplishment for both teams, considering the fierce competition in the Harvest Bowl tournament, particularly for Connecticut, a (AA) team playing in a (AAA) tournament. The 2005 season was a record setting one for the N.E.F.L. in terms of expansion. For the first time in our history, we had five new teams enter the league. The Ocean State Vipers from Rhode Island were added to our Colonial Conference, the Whaling City Clippers out of New Bedford, MA became the latest entry into our North Atlantic Conference, and the Hillsboro County Devils from Manchester, NH, the Southern New England Rage of Mansfield, MA, and the Connecticut Storm, a (A) affiliate of the (AAA) Connecticut Thunder, all joined our Maritime Conference. The Tri-Boro Rhinos were granted a one year leave of absence before the start of the season. The Vermont Ice Storm and the Baystate Rolling Thunder left the league at the conclusion of the 2005 season. The three champions that were crowned were the Boston Bandits who won their third N.E.F.L. title defeating the 2004 defending champion Greater Lowell Nor'easter in the Colonial Conference, the Seacoast Hawks defeated the South Shore Outlaws to claim their first North Atlantic Conference title to go along with their two Maritime Conference championships, and the Southern Rhode Island Raptors beat the Penobscot Seadragons to win their first Maritime Conference championship. The N.E.F.L. sent five of its teams to the 2005 N.A.F.A. tournament. The Greater Lowell Nor'easter, the Merrimack Valley Crush, the Seacoast Hawks, and the South Shore Outlaws all played well, but were eliminated in first round games. The Boston Bandits made it to the N.A.F.A. semi-final game where they were narrowly defeated by the Buffalo Gladiators. In 2006, the N.E.F.L. added six new teams. The Medford Mighty Mustangs and the North Shore Generals joined our Colonial Conference, the Eastern Maine Fighting Warriors and the Mill City Maulers joined our North Atlantic Conference, and the Granite State Demons and Southern New Hampshire Beavers joined our Maritime Conference. The Notre Dame Cobras went undefeated during the regular season and went on to claim their first ever Maritime Conference Championship with a win over the Southern New England Rage. The North Attleboro Renegades defeated the expansion Mill City Maulers in the North Atlantic Conference Championship game to give the Renegades their first ever championship. In the Colonial Conference, the Boston Bandits won their fourth league title by once again beating the Greater Lowell Nor'easter who was their opponent in five N.E.F.L. title games. The Boston Bandits did not go on to play in the 2006 Harvest Bowl tournament because of a schedule conflicts and the Greater Lowell Nor'easter lost in the first round to the eventual champion Brooklyn Mariners. The N.E.F.L. had an unprecedented expansion and growth in 2007. Unfortunately, the Central Maine Shockers folded and the Ocean State Vipers left the league after the 2006 season, however, several new teams, the largest number in league history, were added for season. They were the the Middletown (CT) Spartans, the Kennebec Valley (ME) Tigers, the Tri-City (NH) Charge, and the Southern Vermont Storm all joining our Maritime Conference; the Middlesex Mayhem (MA), the Tyngsboro (MA) Knights joining our North Atlantic Conference; the Weymouth Sharks, and one of the oldest and most successful semi-professional, minor league football teams in the country, the Middleboro Cobras, would take their rich history and join our Colonial Conference. Also in 2007 the Merrimack Valley Crush will be changing their name to the New England Hawks. The North Attleboro Renegades will now be the Baystate Renegades and the Penobscot Seadragons, under new management, are now the Penobscot Valley Wolfpack. The Middleboro Cobras (AAA), Whaling City Clippers (AA) and Leominster Razorbacks (A) all won their respective Conference Championships. In 2008 saw the arrival of the Central Mass Fury, Conn. Bearcats and Gamblers in AA and the N. Berkshire Kings, Green Mountain MuDogs, Vermont Ravens, So. Vermont Storm and C. Vermont Rampage all in the A Conference. The N.E.F.L. was founded on the basic principles of promoting this level of football in a controlled and structured environment while still maintaining a grass roots approach by making participation as cost effective as possible and controlling travel through scheduling geographically by a teams location. This concept has proven to be the right one for the N.E.F.L. Over the past fourteen years, this approach has been the main reason for the leagues growth and success, along with all of the many outstanding and dedicated players, coaches and administrators that tirelessly commit themselves every year to their organizations because of their love for the game. It is the number one goal of the N.E.F.L. Board of Directors to continue to provide a forum that will promote a positive and rewarding experience for everyone.