

## **Bellarmino Knights sprint football FAQ**

### **What is this opportunity?**

Bellarmino University has accepted an invitation to become a co-founding member of the new [Midwest Sprint Football League](#) that will play alongside the existing [Collegiate Sprint Football League](#). The league will initially consist of six private colleges in the Midwest, all within a drivable distance of Louisville to minimize time away from the classroom. Bellarmine will have geographic rights to our primary market. When the roster reaches full capacity, sprint football will account for up to 80 new and returning students.

### **What is sprint football?**

Sprint football is the same as regular football, but all players must be at or below an established weight limit. The weight limit is currently 178 pounds, or 183 pounds with additional metrics required. Sprint football is considered a high-level club sport. In many ways, sprint football will have the elements of a varsity sport, but it will fall under the governance of a separate body since it is a non-NCAA sport.

### **Where will the team practice and play?**

The team will practice at Bellarmine, likely at our sports park at 3408 Newburg Road, adjacent to the university's Watterson Medical Center. Bellarmine will explore the best place to play games.

### **Why is Bellarmine adding a sprint football team?**

Based on information from institutions that currently offer the sport, it will appeal to students who wanted to play football in college but would otherwise not have had the opportunity, primarily because of their size. Many of these students may not have considered attending Bellarmine if the sport were not offered. This decision helps to better position Bellarmine for the future and primarily falls under our strategic plan's third priority – expanding enrollment and geographic reach. The addition of any club athletic program at Bellarmine University is a strategic decision that takes into consideration a number of factors, including participation rates at all levels and resource requirements. At the same time, this move affords us the ability to maximize the impact of athletics to provide student opportunities for leadership and growth; engage alumni and external supporters; and build visibility, enthusiasm and connection to Bellarmine in Louisville, regionally and nationally.

### **When is the first season?**

Bellarmino's inaugural season will take place in the 2022-23 academic year, with competition starting in the fall.

### **How many games will the team play?**

The number of schools that ultimately join the league will determine the number of contests. In the first few years, four to six games will likely be played, with half of them occurring at home and half on the road. Eventually, we would anticipate around eight games per season.

### **What size is the roster?**

The target number is to have a roster of at least 40 new and returning students in the first year, and to eventually get up to 80 student-athletes.

**What is the impact of travel and practice requirements?**

We expect two to three away games in the program's first year, with additional away games when more teams are added to the league. Many of our opponents will be within driving distance, allowing the team to travel, play and return home on the same day. This will help minimize the need for overnight trips. While not an NCAA sport, this will mirror many of the expectations and experiences as our NCAA varsity sports.

**Is football dangerous?**

The safety and protection of our students is Bellarmine's number one priority. We believe that sprint football is safer than traditional football because of the 178-pound weight limit. Data collected from four existing teams with 22 total years of data shows that the average number of concussions in a year was two, with an average of seven days that the student-athlete needed to sit out before being cleared to return to competition. All of Bellarmine's existing policies regarding concussions (including baseline testing, monitoring and clearance by an expert) will be followed.

**Who will coach the team?**

In Summer 2021, Bellarmine is conducting a search for its first sprint football head coach. Additional part time coaching and support staff will be added after the head coach is selected. The coaching staff, working in concert with key campus partners, will be expected to provide support and resources to foster the student-athletes' success, both on and off the field, comparable to our NCAA varsity athletic teams.

**Are there plans to add other non-NCAA sports?**

Bellarmino will continue to explore opportunities to add non-NCAA and club sports if they make sense for our students and for the university.