

# Indian-American Kids In American Football

BY BALAJI KALAVAPALLI

There are not many Indian kids playing football. Most Indian parents believe it is a physically dangerous game. But football is like any other sport, as long as children start at an early age and learn the techniques well.

Sravan Kalavapalli and Kevin Vettickatt are two such Atlanta kids who are excelling in the sport.

Sravan has been playing football for the last two years and he is selected for the Division I, 10-year-old team this year 2009. He is one among 18 players selected for the Div. I team.

He is the center for the team and has been outperforming so far. He plays in the East Cobb Vikings league, which is a member of the North West Georgia Youth Football League ([www.nwgyfl.com](http://www.nwgyfl.com)). Sravan's team has played 8 games so far and has been undefeated with an average score of 40 to nothing.

His team has a very high possibility of becoming Super Bowl champions this year 2009. The head coach for this team is Coach Bobby Williams and he has been coaching this league for a while. He has been recognized by the parents as one of the best football coaches around Atlanta.

Sravan trains vigorously for two hours a days—three days a week. He also plays a game every Saturday that takes almost four hours. It is a highly



*Sravan Kalavapalli*

Sravan says, "It is tough but fun. My position in the team has so much responsibility and I cannot make mistakes for my team. Sometime it gets tough when I have to finish my home work after the practice but I am able to handle it so far."

Head coach Bobby Williams says: "Playing sports is very important for children as it teaches them accountability and responsibility. Parents need to encourage and support their kids in sports. It is the practical environment to teach them many things."

He also said, "Sam (Sravan) is a very critical player in the team. He gives 100% and snaps the ball right every single time. He is the one who touches the ball first before any play on the offence. He has very critical role in the team as a center and we are proud of having him in our team."

Greg Hardin, the president of East Cobb Vikings League says: "We were concerned losing the center player from the last year team

but we are glad to find Sam (Sravan) this year who is doing a great job."

"It is fun to be around kids, so I encourage parents to involve their kids in sports."

Kevin Vettickatt, 4'9", 96 lbs, plays for East Cobb Vikings, a 9 year old in his second season playing for the Division 1 team. He plays 1st string Defensive tackle, 2nd string Offensive tied end and in the Kick off team.

He is a passionate football player, who gives 100% in his practice and 110% in games. He plays fair with a "don't mess with me" attitude. His friends on field know him as Big Cat Vettickatt.

In Dad's words, Kevin has been dreaming of playing football since an early age. "I would love to see him play for GT or Notre Dame," he says.

"It's tough to work around his schedule of 15 hours a week, but as long as he keeps up his studies I can't pull him out of his passion,"

says Kevin's mom.

His head coach Cyrus Hancock says, "He is the most disciplined and coachable kid in his team, an asset on the line".

His other coaches think Kevin sets a higher standard for his teammates to follow.

"Dad I'm going to play in the NFL one day," says a self-assured Kevin.



*Kevin Vettickatt*

disciplined and physically challenging training. Water breaks are only two minutes for every 30 min and the coaches utilize the entire two hours without wasting any time. The training or the games are played in all weather conditions even if it is pouring rain. Even though it is hard to spend so much time on one child, the effort really pays off when we see Sravan having a good time.

# Atlanta Nepalese Families Celebrate Unique Tradition



*Nepalese families gather together at the home of Ram Dangol to sing and dance and pray for the wellbeing of the family. NRI Pulse Photo.*

"The Nepalese families in Atlanta have been keeping this tradition alive for the past five years now," said one of the key organizers, Sanjeeb Sapkota. "The annual tradition is supported by the Nepalese Association of South east America (NASEA), that is headquartered here in Atlanta."

NASEA is an umbrella organization that is made up of

## NRI PULSE NEWS DESK

Atlanta: People of Nepali origin living in Atlanta celebrated *Dheusi* (*Dhey-oo-ci*), a unique Nepali tradition where a group of singers and dancers — children adult, men, women — went from home to home (that invited the group) singing and dancing.

The families that invited the group offered them food and some cash amount. Before leaving each home, the *Dheusi* group gave blessings to the family with an emotional song.

*Dheusi* is a very popular tradition in Nepal. The colorful event follows one day after Diwali, the festival of lights.

regional associations of the southeastern states of the US.

"Part of the funds collected will go towards running the Atlanta Nepali School where children learn to read, write and verbally communicate in Nepali" added Sapkota. The school also imparts cultural education.

"The rest of the funds go towards financing the social and cultural activities organized by the community in Atlanta," said Saunak Ranjitkar, another *Dheusi* participant.

Sapkota said the Nepalese community was keen to collaborate with the Indian community for future cultural and social activities.

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