



Flag Football By-Laws 2023

1st/2nd Grade, 3rd/4th Grade, 5th/6th Grade

- Play will be governed by the official NFL Flag Football rules with the following modifications.
- By-laws may be altered by recreation staff as deemed necessary.

Teams:

- 1st/2nd Grade and 3rd/4th Grade will play 6 vs. 6
- 5th/6th Grade will play 7 vs. 7
- Teams may play with a minimum of 4 players without forfeiting. Teams must be ready to take the field at game time.
- Forfeited games will be played as a scrimmage for fun with the players in attendance. Teams may be divided as necessary.
- Substitutions are unlimited but can only occur on dead balls.
- ALL PLAYERS MUST HAVE EQUAL PLAYING TIME. Coaches must ensure that each player plays at least half of each game they attend.
- First team listed on the schedule will be the “home” team.
- Home team bench and home spectators must sit on the north side of the field. Guest team bench and guest spectators must sit on the south side of the field. Home and guest team benches must be diagonal from each other.

Equipment:

- 1st/2nd Grade and 3rd/4th Grade will use a Pee-Wee size ball (K2)
- 5th/6th Grade will use a Junior size ball (TDJ)
- Metal cleats or spikes are not allowed
- Rubber cleats or athletic shoes are required. Shoes must be worn at all times and must be closed-toe and closed-heel.
- Shirts and jerseys must be tucked in
- Flag belts must be visible and worn at waist level on each side of the player’s hips. Players must NOT tamper or alter their flags in any way.
- Pockets and belt loops are not allowed.
- Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed.
- Mouth guards are encouraged.
- Watches and jewelry must be removed.

Game Length:

- Games will consist of two-20 minute halves with a running clock and a 3 minute halftime.
- The clock shall only stop during the last minute of each half for PAT’s and dead balls (penalties, incomplete passes, fumbles, changes in ball possession, play going out of bounds, etc.) Once the clock is stopped, it will begin again when the ball is snapped after incomplete passes and going out of bounds.
 - Exception: the clock will continue to run if the game is running behind, or if there is a 28+ point difference (only applicable to leagues that keep score).
- Each team will be allowed two- 1 minute time outs per half. These can be used at any time.
 - Exception: time outs may not be used if your team is ahead by 28+ points (only applicable to leagues that keep score).
- Games ending in a tie will remain tied. No overtime will be played

Starting the Game:

- Head coaches and captains will meet before the game to conduct a coin toss.
- The home team will call “heads” or “tails”.
- The winner of the coin toss may choose to go offense or defense to begin the game.
- The loser of the coin toss may choose which end zone they wish to defend to begin the game.
- The team that starts the game on offense will start the second half on defense.
- Teams will switch end zones at halftime.
- There will be NO kick off.
- The offensive team will begin each half on their own 5-yard line.
- The offensive team has 30 seconds to put the ball in play for all plays.

Scoring:

- Score will NOT be kept for 1st/2nd Grade or 3rd/4th Grade.
- Touchdowns are worth 6 points
- Points After Touchdown will NOT be attempted in leagues that do not keep score (1st/2nd and 3rd/4th Grade).
- Points After Touchdown (PAT): 5th/6th ONLY
 - From the 5-yard line are worth 1 point and must be a pass play.
 - From the 10-yard line are worth 2 points and can be a run or pass play.
 - Offensive team must notify the referee if they are going for 1 or 2 points. They cannot change their choice.
 - PAT is declared dead immediately if it is intercepted.
 - PAT cannot be attempted once a 28+ point advantage is gained.
- Safety is worth 2 points and the defense will gain possession at their own 5 yard line to begin their drive.
 - Safety is when the defensive team forces the ball to be down behind the offensive team’s goal line
- After a team is winning by 28 points no additional points will be added to the scoreboard.
- To score, the ball must pass the plane of the end zone line.

Formation:

- The ball must be clearly snapped to an offensive player from the center.
- A legal snap can be between the legs or to the side. The snap must stay onside and it must be one continuous motion.
- Offense must have a minimum of 1 player on the line of scrimmage (the center).
- The Quarterback cannot be on the line of scrimmage.
- Teams may shift formations as long as they are set for at least 1 second prior to the ball being snapped.
- Only one offensive player is allowed in motion while the ball is being snapped. The player in motion must move parallel to the line of scrimmage or backwards. Movement by a player who is set or a player who moves toward the line of scrimmage is considered a false start. (Refer to false start on the Penalty Chart).
- Center Sneak plays are NOT allowed. (An illegal play in which the ball is immediately transferred back to the center from the player receiving the snap). The center must take at least one step forward to receive a legal forward pass or one step backwards to receive a legal handoff.

Coaches on the Field:

- 1st/2nd Grade ONLY is allowed one adult coach per team on the field at any time. All other coaches and other age groups must stay on their respective sidelines except during time-outs.
- Pre-snap huddles are not allowed with the coach for any age group. If a coach wants to huddle, they must use one of their timeouts if available. Players may do a brief huddle with each other as long as the ball is put into play within the 30 seconds allowed.

First Down:

- The offensive team begins on their own 5-yard line and has four downs (four attempts) to cross midfield for a first down.
- If the offensive team crosses midfield, they have four new downs to score a touchdown.
- All possessions begin where the ball was spotted on the previous play. (Where the flag was pulled or where the ball/player touched the ground)
- Fourth Down: If the offense fails to advance after three attempts, they have two options for the fourth down:
 1. They can turn the ball over to the opposing team who starts their drive from their own 5-yard line.
 2. They can go for it. If they still fail to cross the "line to gain" after the fourth down the opposing team takes over possession from the spot of the ball.
- The fourth down decision must be announced to the official and the opposing team before the play.
- There is NO PUNTING in Flag Football

Dead Balls:

- The ball is declared dead in the following situations:
 1. The ball carrier's knee, elbow, hip, or backside touches the ground. A hand on the ground to maintain balance is not considered down.
 2. The ball carrier's flag is pulled.
 3. The ball carrier's flag falls off (ball will be spotted where the flag landed)
 4. The receiver catches the ball while not wearing flags (ball will be spotted where it was caught)
 5. The ball carrier steps out of bounds or the ball goes out of bounds
 6. The ball touches the ground
 - Incomplete Passes
 - Fumbles are dead the moment they touch the ground. Possession of the ball remains with the team who had possession last. (Exception: possession will switch teams if a fumble takes place on the 4th down prior to making a 1st down). Fumbling in your own end zone is considered a safety. Fumbles include when the Quarterback drops or fails to catch a snap. A down is consumed on a fumble.
 7. When a touchdown or PAT is scored
 8. Quarterback fails to pass or handoff the ball in 7 seconds after the snap.
 9. Inadvertent whistle
 10. Dual possession on a pass. No fighting for the ball, offense keeps possession.

Forward Passes:

- 1 forward pass per play
- All forward passes must cross the line of scrimmage
- Handoffs and lateral passes do not count as forward passes.
- A player who receives a handoff or lateral pass behind the line of scrimmage can throw the ball or run the ball.
- Handoffs and lateral passes are not allowed once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel Passes are allowed. (A legal forward pass across the line of scrimmage underhand, backhand or by pushing the ball forward)
- The Quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a "sack"
- The Quarterback has 7 seconds to handoff or pass the ball after receiving the snap. If the quarterback fails to pass or handoff the ball in time the ball is dead, a down is consumed, and the ball is spotted at the line of scrimmage.
- Interceptions may advance
 - Exception: the ball is dead and cannot advance if the interception occurs on a PAT.

Receiving:

- All offensive players are eligible pass receivers.
- The Center must take a minimum of one step in any direction away from the line of scrimmage after the snap to become an eligible pass receiver.
- If a player has lost one or both of their flags when they catch a pass, the ball will be downed where the ball is caught.
- Both feet must be in-bounds when receiving a pass. Touching or crossing a boundary line in any fashion is considered out of bounds.
- Pass Interference when a player hinders an opposing player from catching the ball (pushing, shoving, etc.).

Running:

- Blocking/Screening is NOT allowed at any time.
- Diving/Leaping is NOT allowed. Offensive players may not dive to advance the ball or score. Defensive players may not dive to pull offensive flags.
- Spinning/Jump Cuts are allowed as long as one foot is always in contact with the ground. Both feet cannot leave the ground simultaneously to avoid a flag pull. Excessive spinning may be called flag guarding.
- Any player who receives a handoff behind the line of scrimmage can throw the ball forward or run with the ball.
- The player receiving the snap is allowed to run if they are rushed by the defense. Once the quarterback moves forward, all defensive players are eligible to rush (rush yardage rule is no longer in effect).
 - Exception: they may not run forward if they are in the “no-run zone”.
- If the ball is spotted in the “No-Run Zone”, all plays must be passing plays with no forward running.

No- Run Zone:

- Located five yards before each end zone.
- If the ball is spotted within a “no-run zone”, the offensive team must use a pass play to advance the ball or score a touchdown.
- All plays must be forward pass plays.
 - Exception: Lateral passes are allowed in the “no-run zone” as long as the receiver completes the play with a forward pass without running. Receivers of lateral passes may not cross the line of scrimmage or move forward while in the “no-run zone”.
- “No-run zones” are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays and it helps prevent injury.
- While in the “no-run zones”, ball carriers cannot run the ball forward.
- While in the “no-run zones”, the quarterback may scramble to find an open pass by moving backwards or to the side. They may not move forward.
- No rushing will be allowed in the “no-run zones”.
- Each offensive team approaches only ONE no-run zone in each drive (one zone 5 yards from the goal line).
- If a team intentionally commits a penalty for the purpose of getting out of the “no-run zone” they will receive a loss of down and the line of scrimmage will remain the same. The “no-run zone” rules will still be enforced. The official may determine if the penalty was deemed intentional.

Rushing the Passer:

- All players who wish to rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
 - Exception: when the offensive team is within the “no-run zone”, no rushing will be allowed
- Any number of players can rush the quarterback as long as they follow the rush yardage rule.
- Once the ball has been handed off, passed, or the quarterback runs forward with the ball all defensive players are eligible to rush the ball carrier. (The rush yardage rule is no longer in effect.)
- The referee will designate the rush line with a cone on the field at the start of each play.

- Rushers may jump to block a pass but may not make contact with the quarterback.
- Teams are not required to rush and they are not required to identify their rusher
- If the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage, the ball will be spotted where possession of the ball was at the flag pull.
- Safety takes place when the ball carrier's flags are pulled in the offensive team's end zone.

Flag Pulling:

- Ball carrier must be in full possession of the ball before getting their flags pulled
- Defensive players who pull the flag should immediately raise it up to show the official and then set it on the ground or hand it to the flag owner.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip the ball from the ball-carrier's arms.
- If the ball carrier's flags accidentally fall off during the play, the player is immediately down and the ball will be spotted where the flag landed,
- Flag Guarding is NOT allowed and will result in a penalty. The ball-carrier cannot prevent a defender from pulling their flags. (Refer to flag guarding on the Penalty Chart).
 - Examples: using a stiff arm, covering their flag, tying their flags, lowering their elbow, tampering with their flags, etc.
- Illegal Flag Pull occurs when the defense pulls an offensive player's flag when they do not have possession of the ball. The ball remains live. If the offensive player receives the ball, they are allowed to advance and must be touched with one hand by the defense to end the play.

Sportsmanship:

- The Clinton City Recreation Department is dedicated to providing quality recreational sports programs in a spirit of sportsmanship and fellowship for all of our families, friends and neighbors. It is expected that all players, coaches, parents, and spectators will strongly adhere to all rules of play and etiquette involving the program.
- Officials, site supervisors, and score keepers are representatives of the league. Any questions or concerns regarding the performance of the league representatives should be brought to the attention of the Recreation Supervisor.
- There will be zero tolerance for unsportsmanlike conduct among players, coaches, parents and spectators. Offenders may be ejected and law enforcement may be called when deemed necessary.
- Any player, coach or spectator ejected from a game must schedule an appointment with the Recreation Supervisor within 24 hours of the game in order to be reinstated in the program. An ejection will result in that individual not participating in the game following the ejection and may face expulsion from the league.
- Anyone ejected must leave the field immediately.
- Spectators should not interrupt the game. If a spectator, coach or player has become disruptive, the umpire and / or field supervisor may ask them to leave the park.
- Coaches will be expected to properly educate players the values of teamwork, character, and sportsmanship. Coaches shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct for players, team parents, and spectators.

Penalties:

- Penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage unless otherwise specified as Spot Fouls in the chart below.
- Live ball penalties will be assessed before dead ball penalties.
- Live ball penalties must be assessed before the play is considered complete.
- Penalty for Spot fouls in the end zone:
 - Defensive End Zone: Ball on one-yard line, first down
 - Offensive End Zone: Safety

- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal line when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

PENALTY CHART

II. Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding	+5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping	+5 yards and automatic first down

III. Offensive spot fouls

Screening or blocking	-5 yards and loss of down
Charging	-5 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-5 yards and loss of down

IV. Defensive penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside / Illegal substitution	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

V. Offensive penalties

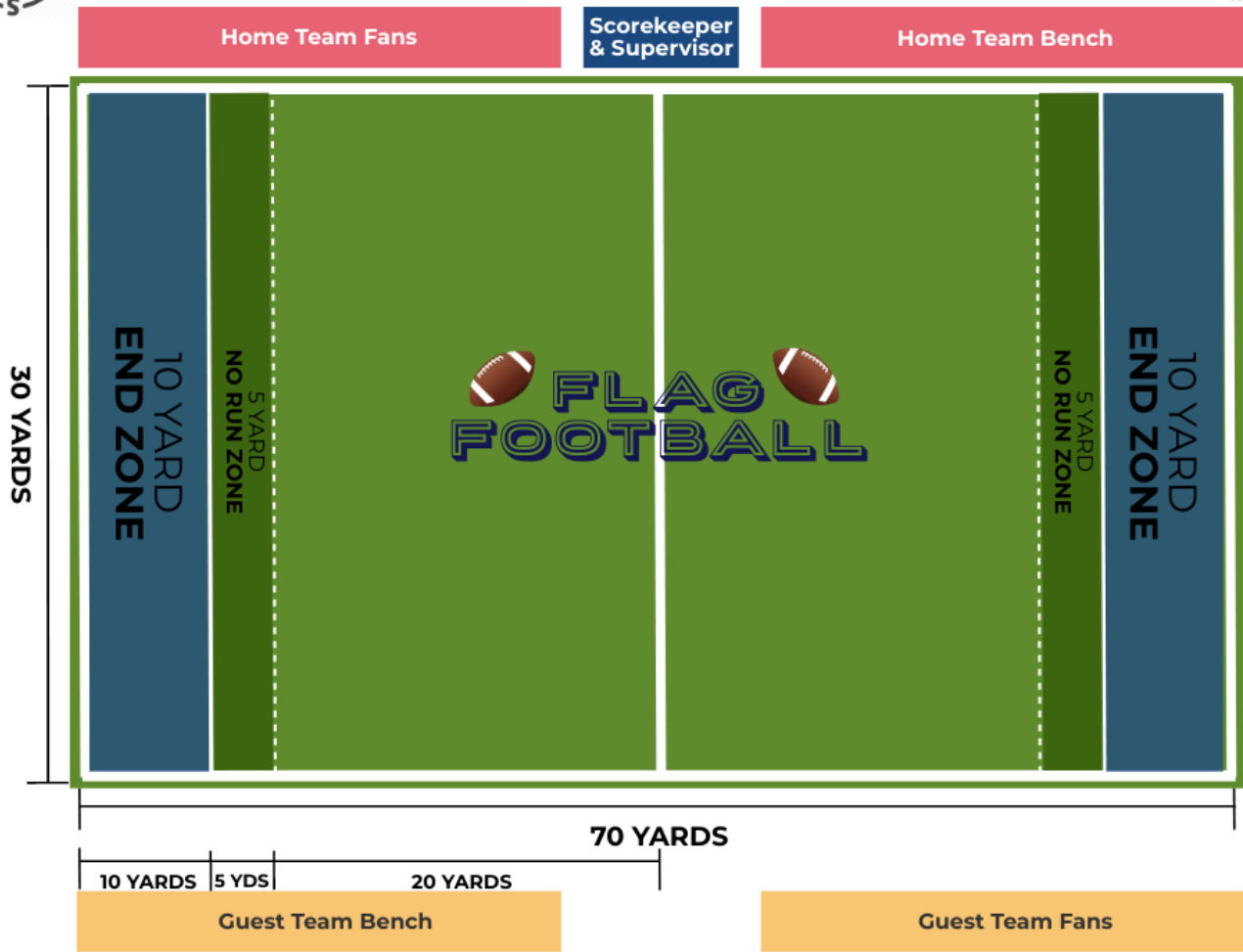
Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside / false start / Illegal substitution	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass (Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion (More than one person moving)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Run in the No-Run-Zones	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage
Center Sneak	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage
Failure to Pass within Pass Clock (7 seconds)	Dead ball, down is consumed, ball spotted at line scrimmage
Diving/Leaping	Defense: +5 yds auto 1 st down, Offense: -5 yds loss of down
Illegal Participation (Player enters the field of play after the ball has been snapped)	Defense: +5 yds auto 1 st down, Offense: -5 yds loss of down

Field Dimensions and Seating:



Clinton City Recreation

Flag Football Field Dimensions



Referee Responsibilities:

- Set up and clean up the fields. (field markers, supervisor table, scoreboard, garbage, etc.)
- Check player equipment (no jewelry or watches, tucked in shirts and jerseys, no flag tampering, no metal cleats, no pockets, etc.)
- Inform coaches when they are out of time outs.
- Referees will determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. Not all contact will be deemed a foul
- Become knowledgeable of the rules by reviewing the by-laws before each shift
- Resolve conflict as it arises and address bad sportsmanship
- Post the scores when applicable and write them in the binder
- Be professional
- Be supportive and helpful to each other
- Be responsible for your shifts
- Help facilitate a fun and safe environment for the players
- Have fun

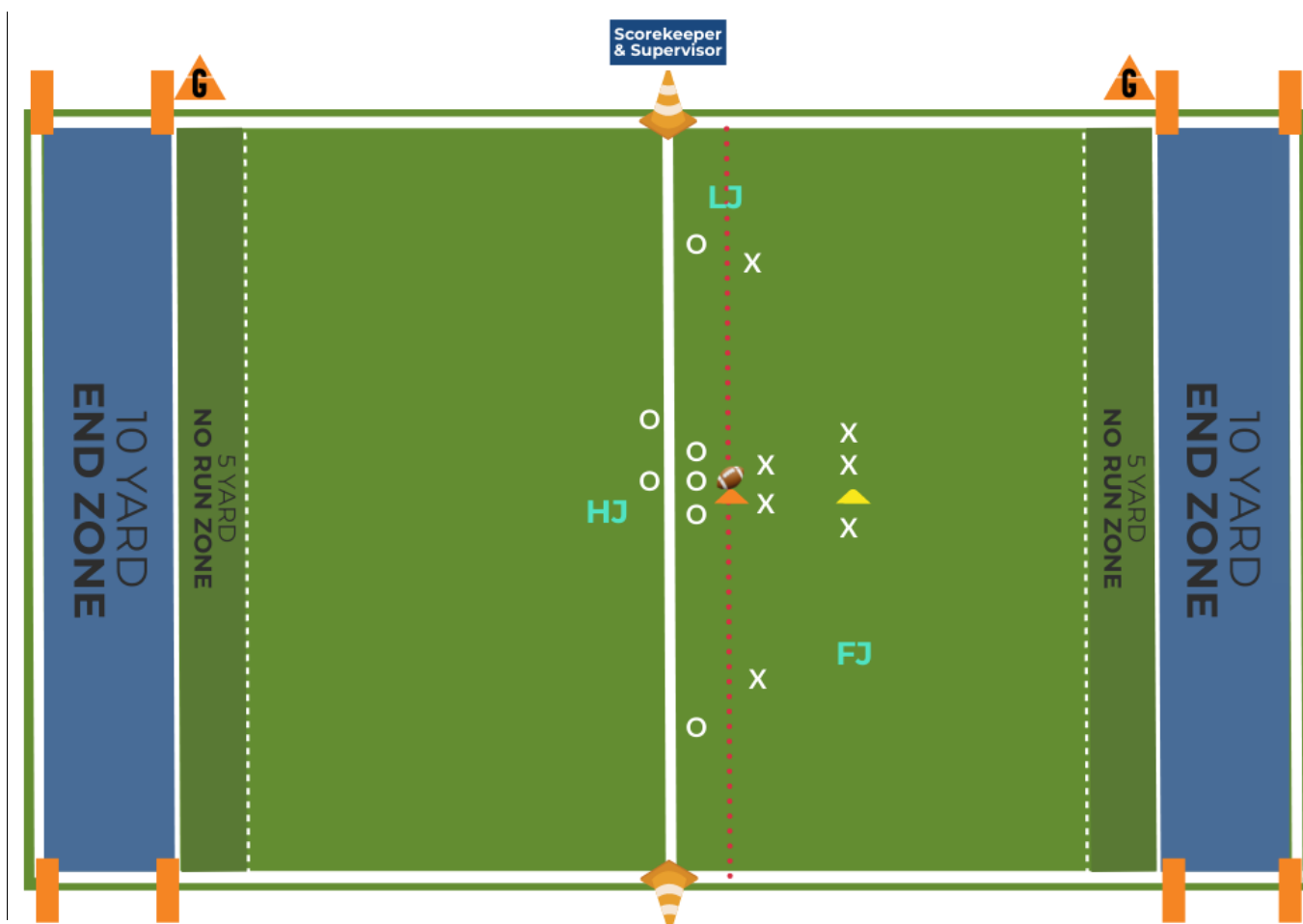
Staff Equipment:

- Supervisor Binder
- 1 Scoreboard
- 1 First Aid Kit
- Supervisor/Scorekeeper table and chairs
- 1 Canopy
- 8 Pylons per field for the end zone corners
- 2 “G” Pylons per field for the north side of the goal lines
- 2 Tall Cones or “25” Yard Pylons per field for each side of the sideline
- Extra Flag Belts
- 2-3 Game Balls per size
- 1 Coin per field for the coin toss
- 2 Flat Cones per field. One orange cone to mark where the ball begins each play. One yellow cone to mark where the rush line is.
- 2 Practice bags per field: 3-4 Pee Wee Balls (blue), 3-4 Junior Balls (brown), 10 tall cones, 5 flat cones
- Referees: staff shirt, stopwatch, referee flags, down counter, penalty cheat sheet

Referee Positions and Coverage:

- **Line Judge:**
 - Stands inbounds on the line of scrimmage. They will always be on the home team side of the field.
 - Primarily responsible for watching the defensive players, the line of scrimmage, and any action past the line of scrimmage.
 - They will move downfield with the players and ball as the play unfolds.
 - Responsible for spotting the ball for the next play and setting up the 7-yard rushing cone.
 - To spot the ball, they will stand by the pulled flag belt with their hand up. Then they will toss the ball to the Head Judge to place it in the center of the field for the next play. After the ball has been placed, they will pace off 7-yards to set up the rushing cone.
 - Counts the number of defensive players at the beginning of each play

- **Head Judge:**
 - Stands behind the quarterback on the guest team side of the field.
 - Primarily responsible for watching the offensive players, quarterback coverage, and any action behind the line of scrimmage.
 - They will stay with the players in back. No one should be behind the head judge.
 - Responsible for placing the ball cone and the ball to start each play based on spot determined by the Line Judge.
 - Yells out which down it is at the beginning of each play and reminds players if they are in the “no-run zone”.
 - This referee has the general oversight and control of the game.
 - Counts the number of offensive players at the beginning of each play
- **Field Judge:** Field judge will only be used for 5th/6th grade and Jr. High pending staff availability.
 - Stands near the 7-yard rushing cone on the guest team side of the field.
 - Primarily responsible for covering deep passes.
 - Responsible for helping players set up for next play and helping the line judge with their responsibilities.



Referee Hand Signals:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| • Touchdown | • Disregard Flag | • Holding |
| • Safety | • Delay of Game | • Blocking |
| • First Down | • False Start | • Incomplete Pass |
| • Dead Ball | • Loss of Down | • Off Sides |
| • Ball Ready for Play | • Unsportsmanlike Conduct | • End of Game/Halftime |
| • Time Out | • Pass Interference | |