

## **RULES**

### **FLAG FOOTBALL**

#### **A. Game**

1. NFL Flag will govern all play in addition to the listed playing rules.
2. At the start of each game, coaches from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
  - i. The winner will elect to start on offense or defense.
  - ii. The loser of the coin toss will elect choice of direction.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield or score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
5. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
6. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

#### **B. Field**

1. The field dimensions are approximately 30 x 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain.
2. No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
  - i. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zones (a 5 yard imaginary zone before and after midfield and before the end zones), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

#### **C. Rosters**

1. The roster maximum is 10 players.
2. Teams will play five on five.
3. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field, but no fewer than four.

#### **D. Equipment**

1. Each coach will be provided with flag belts and footballs.
2. Mouth guards are highly recommended.
3. With the approval of the game official, players may use any other safety equipment that they choose to use.
4. Uniforms provided must be worn on game days.
5. Players must wear shoes. Rubber cleats are allowed; the use of metal cleats is prohibited.
6. Players must remove all jewelry with the exception of medical alert bracelets/necklaces.
7. Players' game day shirts must be tucked into their pants/shorts.
  - i. Failure to do constitutes as flag guarding.
8. The following game balls will be used:
  - i. 6U: Pee Wee
  - ii. 8U: Pee Wee
  - iii. 10U: Junior
  - iv. 13U: Junior

#### **E. Timing and Overtime**

1. The game will consist of two 20 minute running halves. The clock stops only for timeouts.
  - i. 13U will consist of two 25 minute running halves.
2. Play clock
  - i. The play clock is established to encourage a fast-paced game.

- ii. The play clock is kept by the referee.
- iii. The play clock is started once the official sets the ball ready for play; the play clock runs until the ball is snapped.
- iv. The referee is encouraged to warn teams once the play clock is close to expiring.
  - 1. 6U and 8U: The play clock is 45 seconds.
  - 2. 10U and 13U: The play clock is 30 seconds.
- 3. Halftime is three minutes long.
- 4. Each team has one 60-second time-out per half. Time-outs do not carry over between halves.
- 5. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
- 6. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game should be determined a tie.
- 7. In playoff situations (10U/13U age group only), an overtime (OT) period will be used to determine a winner. OT format is as follows:
  - i. Each team gets one series of four (4) plays starting at midfield.
    - 1. First possession choice goes to the winner of overtime coin toss. First possession will alternate for each subsequent overtime period.
    - 2. There is no sudden death; each team gets a minimum of one possession.
  - ii. Each team will be scored based on points scored:
    - 1. If both teams score touchdowns and complete the same amount of points in conversions, the process is repeated.
      - a. Starting with the 3<sup>rd</sup> overtime possession after scoring, teams must attempt a 2 point conversion.
      - b. In the case of an interception, the ball will be marked at either the line of scrimmage (midfield) or the point where the defender's flags were pulled, whichever is the more advantageous spot to the defense.
      - c. If the defensive team intercepts the ball and returns it for a touchdown, said team wins.
  - iii. There are no time-outs; time-outs do not carry over from 2<sup>nd</sup> half.

## F. Scoring

- 1. For the 6U and 8U age groups, score will not kept. For the 10U and 13U age groups, Score will be kept score. Official score will be kept by the referee.
- 2. If in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half there is a 28 point differential, the scoreboard will be turned off; however, the referee will continue to keep an official score.
  - i. A maximum of a 28 points difference per game will be counted in the final standings.
- 3. Touchdown: 6 points
- 4. Point After Touchdown (PAT): 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
  - i. Note: 1 point PAT can only be a pass. 2 point PAT can be run or pass.
  - ii. A team that scores a touchdown must declare which PAT it chooses to attempt. Any change, once the ball is placed ready for play, requires a charged time out. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
  - iii. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
- 5. Safety: 2 points
  - i. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.

## G. Coaches

- 1. For the 6U and 8U age groups, coaches are allowed on the field in the huddle and prior to the play to direct players.
- 2. For the 10U and 13U age groups, coaches are allowed on the field in the huddle but must move to the sidelines prior to the snap.

3. Coaches are discouraged to audible plays once the huddle has been broken.

#### H. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The following are considered legal snaps: under center snap, side snap, shotgun snap.
  - i. The ball must remain in contact with the ground until the snap.
3. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone.
4. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
5. Play is ruled "dead" by any official when:
  - i. The ball hits the ground; the ball carrier's flag is pulled; the ball carrier's flag falls off; the ball carrier steps out of bounds; the ball carrier's knee or arm hits the ground; the receiver catches the ball while in possession of no flag(s); the 10 second pass clock expires; a touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
  - ii. Note: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble.

#### I. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
  - i. "Center Sneak" play – not permitted
4. No laterals or pitches of any kind.
5. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off by the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
  - i. Runners may only leave their feet if there is clear indication they did so to avoid a collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
9. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
10. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.

#### J. Passing

1. All passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage and received beyond it.
2. Shovel passes are allowed, but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
  - i. **6U/8U** the quarterback has a 10-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the ten seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.
    1. The ball carrier must cross the line of scrimmage or throw the ball before the 10 second clock expires
    2. If the ball is handed off, the 10-second rule is still in effect.
  - ii. **10U/13U** the quarterback has an 8-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the eight seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.
    1. The ball carrier must cross the line of scrimmage or throw the ball before the 8 second clock expires
    2. If the ball is handed off, the 8-second rule is still in effect.

## **K. Receiving**

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback, if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion (minimum of one yard behind and parallel to line of scrimmage) at a time.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions are returnable, but not on conversions after touchdowns.

## **L. Rushing the Passer**

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
  - i. If a rusher leaves the Rush Line early, they may return to the Rush Line to reset, then legally rush the quarterback.
2. No defensive players may be moving towards the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball, but are allowed to move laterally.
3. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
4. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
  - i. A penalty may be called if:
    1. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and continues to rush.
    2. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
    3. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off.
  - ii. Special circumstances:
    1. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, ten second clock in effect.
    2. If rusher leaves the Rush Line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as defender with no offside penalty enforced.
5. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, no contact can be made with the quarterback. Making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
6. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback. If the "path" is occupied by a moving offensive player, it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.
7. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when flag is pulled.

## **M. Flag Pulling**

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when attempting.
3. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and play ends.
4. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball and doing so may result in an unsporting conduct foul.
5. Flag guarding is an illegal attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder, intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey, or leaving the ground.

## N. Formations

1. Offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center).
  - i. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.
3. Movement by a player who is set is considered a false start.
4. Movement by a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered an illegal motion.

## O. Penalties

1. General
  - i. Game officials determine incidental contact, which may result from normal run of play.
  - ii. Only head coaches may ask the game official questions regarding the rule clarifications and interpretations. Players cannot question an official's call.
  - iii. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines the penalty.
  - iv. Intentional contact is prohibited. The first offense will result in a warning; the second offense will result in ejection of player.
    1. Offensive intentional contact will result in a 10 yard penalty from the spot of the foul & loss of down.
    2. Defensive intentional contact will result in 1<sup>st</sup> down at the spot of the foul.
  - v. Unsporting conduct is prohibited. Unsporting conduct penalties may be called on players, coaches, or parents.
    1. Offensive unsporting conduct will result in a 10 yard penalty & loss of down.
    2. Defensive unsporting conduct will result in a 10 yard penalty & automatic first down.
    3. Any player or coach receiving two unsporting conduct penalties in one game will be disqualified from playing / participating in the rest of the game and may be subject to further disciplinary action as deemed necessary by the officials, site supervisor or sports administration team. Intentional Contact penalties count towards the total of Unsporting Conduct penalties for players. Any spectator who receives two unsporting conduct penalties in one game must leave the playing area immediately and may be subject to further disciplinary action as deemed necessary by the officials, site supervisor or sports administration team.
2. Defensive Penalties
  - i. Pre Snap Penalties
    1. Offsides/Encroachment: 5 yards and repeat the down (play is blown dead at the snap).
  - ii. Line of Scrimmage Penalties
    1. Illegal Rushing: 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
    2. Illegal Contact/Defensive Holding (before the pass is executed): 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
    3. Roughing the Passer: 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
  - iii. Spot Penalties
    1. Defensive Pass Interference: Ball is placed at the spot of the foul and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
    2. Defensive Holding on a Ball Carrier (using any part of a player's uniform to impede the ball carrier or assist in a flag pull): 5 yards added to the end of the play and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
    3. Excessive Contact: 5 yards added to the end of the play and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
    4. Intentional Contact: 10 yards added to the end of the play and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
    5. Unsporting Conduct: 10 yards added to the end of the play and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
3. Offensive Penalties
  - i. Pre Snap Penalties
    1. False Start / Offsides: Loss of 5 yards and repeat the down.

2. Delay of Game (after 1 warning): Loss of 5 yards and repeat the down.
- ii. Line of Scrimmage Penalties
  1. Illegal Motion (more than one person in motion; motion towards or away from the line of scrimmage at the snap): Loss of 5 yards and loss of down.
  2. Illegal Forward Pass (pass that is either released by a player who has passed the line of scrimmage or a forward pass that does not cross the line of scrimmage before being caught): Loss of 5 yards and loss of down.
  3. Performing a running play in the "no run zone": play is blown dead, ball is placed at the original line of scrimmage and loss of down.
  4. Offensive Pass Interference: Loss of 5 yards and loss of down.
  5. Impeding the Rusher: loss of 5 yards and loss of down.
- iii. Spot Penalties
  1. Excessive Contact: 5 yard loss from the spot of the foul and loss of down.
  2. Intentional Contact: 10 yard loss from spot of the foul and loss of down.
  3. Flag Guarding: 10 yard loss from spot of foul and loss of down.
  4. Jumping/Diving to avoid the defense or reach a spot: Loss of 5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.
  5. Offensive Holding/Blocking/Screening: Loss of 5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.
  6. Unsporting Conduct: Loss of 10 yards from the conclusion of the play and loss of down.
4. For any fouls not specifically listed above, officials will use their best judgement to apply a listed penalty to the situation.