



Jr. Rattlers Flag Football  
**League Rules – Fall 2008**



**ATTIRE**

- Cleats are allowed except for metal spikes. Inspections will be made prior to the start of each game and can be made at anytime during a game.
- Every player must wear a protective mouthpiece.
- Official Flag belts must be worn during games. There are no exceptions to this rule. Flags must be worn on each side of the player's hips in line with the hip joint.
- Official Rattlers Flag Football Jerseys must be worn during games.
- Jerseys must be tucked in at all times during the game.
- Nicknames may be screen-printed on jerseys, but only if the entire team does it.

**TEAMS AND ELIGIBILITY**

- Teams must field a minimum of four (4) players at all times.
- Teams usually consist of 7 - 10 players although there may be exceptions.
- All players must be registered with the league. Playing with unregistered players will result in immediate forfeiture and possible league suspension.
- Teams are required to report to their assigned field of play by the scheduled start time or face possible forfeiture.

**POSSESSION**

- 2 Team captains and Head Coaches must meet the referees at midfield prior to the start of the game
- A coin toss determines first possession. The winner of the coin toss may choose to go on offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss may choose the end of the field they wish to defend.
- The team that starts the game on defense, will start the second half on offense and vice versa.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross each first down marker.
- Upon successful conversion of a first down, the offensive team has three (3) additional plays to score.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield or fails to cross a first down marker possession of the ball changes and the opposing team starts from its 5-yard line.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, will start on the 5-yard line of the offensive team.

**REGULATION PLAY AND CLOCK**

- Games are played in two 20 minute halves with a running clock. Following a 5 minute halftime break, teams change sides to begin the second half.
- During the first 18 minutes of each half, the clock will run continuously unless a time-out is called.

- During the last 2 minutes of each half, the clock will stop when there is an incomplete pass, a penalty, change of possession, or when a ball-carrier runs out of bounds provided the score is within 16 points.

*For example, the clock would stop during the final two minutes if the score were 36-20 but not if it were 37-20.*

- The offensive team has 30 seconds to snap the ball once it has been spotted.

The offense may snap the ball at anytime after the Line Judge has signaled the start of the 30 second snap count regardless of the readiness of the defense. The referee will warn the offensive team when there are 10 seconds left on the snap count clock.

- Each team has two 60-second time outs per half.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion for an injury, pet on the field, etc.

### **OVERTIME (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade only)**

- If the score is tied at the end of regulation, teams move into overtime.
- A coin toss at midfield will determine choice for first possession or end of field to defend for each set of overtime possessions.
- Overtime is college rules overtime. Each team will start at the 20 yard line and have three plays to score, and can go for one or two point conversions. At the end of the second overtime teams must go for two points. The teams keep going until someone wins.

### **CONDUCT**

- At the snap, on-field coaches must be 5 yards behind their nearest player.
- Contact is to be limited to that of an incidental nature that is a normal part of flag football.
- Players are expected to behave in a civil manner. Flag slamming, flag throwing, or other uncivil acts will result in a verbal warning for the first offense and an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for each subsequent offense.
- Taunting, trash talking, cursing or other offensive language or behavior by players, coaches or their fans will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for the first offense and possible suspension for the second offense.
- Reckless play deemed by the referee to be potentially dangerous or harmful (e.g., tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, roughing, pushing, etc) will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Two such acts committed by one player during a game will result in automatic ejection.
- Play that is deemed by the referee to be intentionally malicious (e.g. clothes lining, blatant tackling with no effort to pull flags, etc.) will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and immediate player ejection. Two such acts by one team during a game will result in possible suspension.

### **DEAD BALL**

Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.

Play is ruled "dead" when:

The ball touches the ground.

Ball carrier's flag is pulled.

Ball carrier steps out of bounds.

Ball carrier's knee, elbow, hip or backside touches the ground.

When a touchdown or extra point is made.

### **SPOTTING THE BALL**

- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's forward-most foot is when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.

*Note: The ball-carrier's forward-most foot is the one that is both closest to his goal line and in contact with the ground. For example, should a defender pull the flag of a ball-carrier who has his front foot elevated over the goal line and his back foot on the ground six inches in front of the goal line, the ball will be spotted where his forward-most grounded foot was when the flag was pulled – six inches in front of the goal line.*

- If a ball carrier's flag falls out while running, the ball is marked at the spot where the ball carrier's forward-most foot was when the flag came out.
- Defensive players that start a play without a flag can intercept a pass but cannot advance it. The ball is spotted where the interception occurs.
- The play is ruled dead when the ball makes contact with the ground. In the case of a fumble or muffed snap, the ball is spotted at the forward-most foot of the player who last touched it.

*Example 1: a player fumbles the ball forward. The ball is spotted where the player's forward-most foot was at the time of the fumble, not where the ball lands.*

*Example 2: a player muffs a snap while standing in the end zone. The ball is spotted where the player's forward-most foot is at the time of the muff, not where the ball lands. This spot results in a safety.*

### **HIKING**

- The ball must be snapped between the legs to start play.
- Center sneak plays are not allowed.

*Note: A center sneak is any play in which the ball is transferred immediately to the center from the player receiving the snap. A center must take at least one step forward to receive a legal forward pass or one step backward to accept a legal handoff or pitch.*

- The ball can be hiked from the center to any offensive player.
- The ball must be snapped from the spot where the referee places it.
- Any number of offensive players may shift prior to the snap. One player on offense is allowed in motion at the snap. The player in motion must be moving parallel to the line of scrimmage or in a backward direction. All other players on offense must be set prior to the snap.

### **RUNNING**

- All players receiving a hand-off or a pitch behind the line of scrimmage are eligible to run the ball.

*Note: A pitch is defined herein as any ball tossed or thrown to a player standing in a spot behind the player pitching it. A pitch can be tossed underhand or overhand.*

- Once the ball has been handed off or pitched, all defensive players are eligible to rush the ball carrier regardless of their position prior to the snap.
- No pitches or handoffs are allowed once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage.

- No-Run Zones are located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards from midfield. Running the ball is never allowed when the ball is spotted within this zone. The only way to advance the ball in the No-Run zone is with a forward pass.
- If a player missing a flag takes a handoff, the play is ruled dead at the spot of the forward-most foot of the player receiving the handoff.

### **PASSING**

- All forward passes must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

*Note: A forward pass is defined herein as any ball tossed or thrown to a player standing in a spot in front of the player throwing it. A forward pass can be thrown overhand or underhand.*

- Once a legal forward pass is completed, no other passes, pitches or handoffs are allowed.
- Shovel passes are allowed and subject to all the rules pertaining to forward passes.
- If there is no rush from the defense, the quarterback has 7 seconds to either handoff or pass the ball. After 7 seconds a penalty flag will be thrown but play will continue to a dead ball.
- Interceptions may be advanced including those made during extra point attempts and during overtime.

### **RECEIVING**

- All players are eligible to receive forward passes or pitches.
- If a player missing a flag catches the ball, the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the receivers forward most foot. However, if the reception is made in the end zone, the score will not be allowed and the ball will be placed at the defenses 5 yard line for the next play.

*Note: If the disallowed reception was made on 3rd down or during an extra point attempt, the points are not allowed and the offense turns possession over to the opposing team.*

- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- If a defensive player pulls a receivers flag prior to a legal reception of a pitch or forward pass, the defense will be flagged for Illegal Flag Pull but the play will not be whistled dead. If the receiver makes the catch, the play will remain live until the receivers other flag is pulled. If both flags are pulled illegally and the catch is made, the play remains live until a defender touches the ball carrier with two hands.

### **RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK**

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. A special marker, or the referee, will designate seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
- The rusher is allowed a direct line to the quarterback as long as he rushes from at least two yards either side of the 7-yard rushing marker. Contact with or attempts to impede the rusher will be ruled offensive blocking.
- A defender rushing from a point within 2 yards of the 7-yard rushing marker (i.e. up the middle) may not interfere with a receiver. Contact with or attempts to impede a receiver will be ruled defensive holding.
- Any number of players can rush the quarterback.
- Rushers are allowed to bat the pass with their hands so long as they don't leave their feet or rough the passer.

- Once the ball is handed off or pitched, the seven-yard rushing rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders are eligible to rush.

### **SCORING**

- Touchdowns are worth 6 points.
- Extra Points are worth 1 point from 5-yard line or 2 points from 12-yard line.
- A Safety is worth 2 points.

### **RULES VIOLATIONS**

- All penalties will be assessed at the end of the play.
- Spinning is allowed but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player.
- Diving or leaping to advance the ball is not allowed. If a player dives or leaps, the ball will be marked where the player left his feet.
- Blocking is not allowed. No player may intentionally run interference, screen or make contact with a player from the opposing team with the intent of impeding motion.
- Any player that steps out of bounds during play must return to the field of play immediately or be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Any player that comes onto the field from out of bounds after the play has begun will be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Referees will determine incidental contact that results from normal play.
- The head coach may ask the referee for a rules clarification or interpretation **but the request must come immediately after the play in question.** Any stoppage of play by a coach to question a call or rule pertaining to a play other than the one just played will result in a delay of game penalty.
- Players may not question calls. Coaches may not question judgment calls.
- Penalties may be declined.
- In the case of offensive and defensive penalties occurring on the same play, the down will be replayed unless one of the infractions was a personal foul. In that case, the personal foul would take precedence over the non-personal foul.

*Example: A defender interferes with a pass and, following the whistle, the offensive player turns and pushes the defensive player in anger. While both the defense and offense are flagged respectively for pass interference and unsportsmanlike conduct, the offense alone would then be penalized for the personal foul of unsportsmanlike conduct.*

- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- In the case of an inadvertent whistle while the ball is in a player's possession, the team with possession of the ball has the option of: a) replaying the down from the original line of scrimmage or, b) accepting the play with the ball being spotted where the ball-carrier was at the moment of the inadvertent whistle.
- In the case of an inadvertent whistle during a legal forward pass, the ball is returned to the original line of scrimmage and the down is replayed.
- If a personal foul is committed during or immediately after a play whistled dead by an inadvertent whistle, the penalty for the personal foul would take precedence over the inadvertent whistle ruling.

### **GENERAL PENALTIES:**

- Roughing/Unsportsmanlike conduct = 10 yards from end of play.
- Delay of game = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
- Too many players on the field = 5 yards from line of scrimmage.
- Illegal pitch = 5 yards from original line of scrimmage or point of infraction if beyond the line of scrimmage.

*Note: Half the distance to the goal will be walked off whenever the listed penalty yardage is in excess of half the distance between the goal line and the spot from where the penalty yardage is to begin.*



*Example: The original line of scrimmage is 7 yards from the goal line. The defense is flagged for being offside. The ball will be placed halfway to the goal at the 3 ½ yard mark and the offense is awarded an automatic 1st down.*

### **OFFENSIVE PENALTIES:**

#### **ALL OFFENSIVE PENALTIES RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC LOSS OF DOWN**

*Note: Loss of Down means that there is no repeating of down. For example, an offensive penalty on 1st down means that the offensive team is penalized yardage plus the 1st down play during which the penalty occurred. The next play run by the offense would therefore be 2nd down. Penalties on 2nd down are followed by a 3rd down play. Penalties on 3rd down plays result in a change of possession.*

- Illegal Hike/Illegal Motion/False Start = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
- Illegal Run in No-Run Zone = 5 yards from original line of scrimmage.
- Illegal Forward Pass = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
- Offensive Pass Interference = 10 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
- Flag Guarding/Blocking = 10 yards from spot of foul.
- Center Sneak = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
- Failure to pass within 7 seconds = Loss of down only.

### **DEFENSIVE PENALTIES:**

#### **ALL DEFENSIVE PENALTIES RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN**

- Offside/Illegal Rush = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
- Pass Interference = Ball placed at spot of the foul. In the case of pass interference in the end zone, the ball will be spotted 1 yard from the goal line.
- Holding/Illegal Contact/Illegal Flag Pull = 10 yards from the original line of scrimmage.