HIGHLANDS RANCH
Metro District
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YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE RULES

PRE-GAME

Officials will discuss the following during the pre-game meeting:

A. Sportsmanship
B. Ensure that jerseys are tucked in
C. Shorts have no pockets or belt loops. Shorts must be a different color than flags. If wearing knee high socks, they must be a different color than flags.
D. No jewelry. Exception: Medical Bracelets or Medical Pendants
E. Flag Check – flags are properly worn on hips. No cutting/altering the flag size or tying knots to make flag pulling harder. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
F. Cleats do not have metal spikes
G. Mouthpieces are recommended
H. Kindergarten– 3rd grade will use a pee-wee size game ball
I. 4th – 8th grade will use a junior size game ball
J. No ball caps, hats, or bandanas may be worn during play

GAME PLAY

A. Each team will play 5 players at a time (5v5).
B. A coin toss determines first possession. Winner of the toss selects offense or defense for 1st half. Loser of the toss selects goal to defend. The first possession of second half goes to the team that started the first half on defense.
C. 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, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the other team takes over on offense at their 5-yard line.
D. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line.
E. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line. There are no punts or kick-offs.
F. Teams change sides after 25 minutes (halftime). Possession will change after the first half is complete.
G. Clock starts on the first snap of each half.
H. This is a NO CONTACT league. There is no blocking or tackling allowed in the youth flag football league. Any contact is subject to an unnecessary roughness penalty at the official's discretion.
I. Scorekeeper – The official score will be kept by the referees.
J. **Mandatory play** – Each player should be able to run the ball or be thrown to at least once per game. Rotating positions is strongly encouraged.
K. Team Practice Limit – Each team is limited to one practice per week. Teams conducting practices other than prior to a game will be subject to the following:
    1. First offense – 1 game suspension for coach
    2. Second offense – 1 year suspension for coach
    3. Third offense – Team subject to remaining game forfeitures

TIMING/OVERTIME

A. All league games shall be two 25-minute running halves. There will be a 3-minute halftime.
B. If the score is tied at the end of 50 minutes, teams move directly into overtime. A coin flip will determine first possession in overtime.
   - One possession (4 plays) each to win the game starting at defenses 12-yard line. If team A scores on first possession and Team B fails to score team A wins. If still tied after one possession, the game will result in a tie. Coach will choose PAT option after TD in OT.
C. Mercy Rule – If a team is ahead by 40 points with 10 minutes or less. The official score will be cut off and the score will be frozen. Game play will continue.
D. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
   - K – 3rd grade divisions will play a team ready format. Both teams must be ready and set before the ball can be snapped.
   - 4th – 8th grade divisions will play ball ready. The offense can snap the ball once it is put in play by the referee.
E. Each team has one 60-second time out and one 30-second time out per half.
F. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.

SCORING

Touchdown: 6 points
Extra Point: 1 point - played from the 5-yard line (Pass Only)
2 points - played from the 12-yard line (Run or Pass)
Safety: 2 points

Touchdown and PAT (Point(s) after touchdown): The score is made when the runner's or receiver's front grounded foot crosses the goal line.
A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt. conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-pt. conversion (from the 12-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out. Interceptions are not returnable on conversions after touchdowns.

Safety: **2 points**

a. 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.

FIELD

A. The recommended field size is 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones and a midfield line-to-gain. No-Running Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
B. No Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No Run Zones (a 5 yard zone before midfield and before the endzone), teams may not run the ball in any fashion. All plays, including those that begin with a handoff, must be pass plays. *Exception – Kindergartner/1st Grade must make one pass attempt in the no run zone before being allowed to run again.
C. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
D. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

COACHES

A. Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game.
B. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all times.
C. Head and assistant coaches, along with parents, spectators and participants are expected to adhere to HRMD philosophies, coaching guidelines and codes of conduct.
D. Only three coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines. Only one coach on the field with the players. When the play is in progress, the coaches must be off of the field and out of the way of the play. Coach

interference penalty will be called. Both offensive and defensive coaches need to be off of the field when the ball has been snapped.

RUNNING

A. The quarterback cannot run with the ball after receiving the snap from the center. (no quarterback sneaks or scrambles are allowed)

B. Direct handoffs, laterals or pitches must be made behind the line of scrimmage. Multiple handoffs, laterals or pitches are allowed on each play. No handoffs, laterals or pitches are allowed beyond the line of scrimmage.

C. The "Center Sneak" play – the ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the LOS in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB.

D. "No-Running-Zones" are located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards on both sides of midfield. They are designed to avoid short yardage or power running situations. The offensive team must pass if the ball is spotted inside of these "No-Running Zones".

- Exception: The Kindergarten/1st grade league must pass the ball once while inside the NRZ, but can then run the ball any subsequent downs.

Example #1: If an offensive team is at their own 10 yd line and a play develops, whether it is a run or a pass, they do not need to stop at the No-Running Zones at midfield or before the end zone, if flags are not pulled. So a team could score a touchdown from their own 10 yd line, by running the length of the field if the flags are not pulled.

Example #2: Once a team secures a first down at mid-field, the mid-field No-Running Zone does not apply for the rest of that team's possession until they reach the zone before the end zone

****When the offense team is in a no-run zone, passes must be forward and to a player over the line of scrimmage: In the no-run zone, plays with forward passes to players behind the line of scrimmage will be considered running plays and a penalty of running in a no run zone will apply.**

****** A pre-snap penalty on the offense cannot be declined by the defense. Enforcement 5 yards back and replay of down. If this occurs in the no-run zone, the offense still must pass.**

E. The player who takes the handoff, lateral or pitch can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

F. Once the ball has been handed off or pitched, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

G. Spinning is allowed by the ball carrier. No diving and no hurdling by either the offense or defense. Players can leave their feet to catch a pass or make an interception.

Example:

- **No diving into the end zone**
- **No diving or jumping to pull the opposing flags off**

H. The ball is spotted where the ball carriers front grounded foot is when the flag is pulled out, NOT where the ball is located.

I. The ball is spotted where the ball carriers front grounded foot is on a failed lateral, pitch or fumble, NOT where the ball lands on the ground.

RECEIVING

A. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off or pitched behind the line of scrimmage).

B. One foot inbounds constitutes a legal catch.

C. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock". If a pass is NOT thrown within seven seconds, the play is dead and treated as an incomplete pass, and the down is consumed. Once the ball is handed off or pitched, the seven-second rule is no longer in effect.

D. Interceptions are the only change of possession that does not start play over at the 5-yard line. Once intercepted, the player may advance until his/her flag is pulled. That team will then start their drive from that spot.

E. Only one forward pass is allowed per down.

DEAD BALL

A. The ball must be snapped between the legs not off to the side, to start play.

B. An errant snap(the quarterback never establishes possession of the ball) is treated like an incomplete pass; the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball returns to the LOS or turned over on downs.

C. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.

D. **Play is ruled "dead" when:

- The ball carrier's flag is pulled
- The ball carrier steps out of bounds
- A touchdown or safety is scored
- The ball carrier's knee, elbow, hip or backside touches the ground
- The ball carrier's flag falls off, or the receiver's flag falls off
- The ball hits the ground because of an incomplete forward pass. The ball is spotted at the LOS
- The ball hits the ground because of an incomplete backward pass or a fumble. The ball is spotted where the player loses possession of the ball

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the player loses possession of the ball.

E. A dead ball penalty occurs when:

- There is a false start or illegal motion (5 yards/replay the down)
- If any player is across the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped (offsides/replay down)
- If any player breaks the plane of the line of scrimmage (except for the snapper's right to be over the ball) and touches the ball or an opponent prior to the snap (5 yards/replay down)

INADVERTENT WHISTLE

The offense has two options if an inadvertent whistle occurs

A. Replay the down from the original Line of Scrimmage

B. Take the spot of forward progress at the time the whistle blew

RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK

A. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of ten yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.

B. **Any number of players can rush the quarterback**. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the ten-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.

C. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line ten yards from the line of scrimmage.

D. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.

E. **A legal rush is:**

- Any rush from a point 10 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
- A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
- If a rusher leaves the rush line early, they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
- If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
- A penalty occurs when:
    1. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards – Line of Scrimmage).

2. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed – Illegal Rush (5 yards - Line of Scrimmage).

F. Players rushing the Quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way.
G. Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a 10-yard penalty.
H. A Sack occurs if the QB's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the QB's feet are when the flag is pulled.
   - A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

FORMATIONS

A. An offensive team must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the Center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage. No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
B. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the one player in motion (Illegal Motion – 5 yards – Line of Scrimmage).
C. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start (5 yards – Line of Scrimmage).

BLOCKING/ILLEGAL CONTACT

A. Blocking is not allowed in our leagues. Blocking is any purposeful attempt by an offensive player to impede a defensive player (while not stationary) from pulling the flag of a ball carrier. An offensive player cannot run out in front of, along side of or directly behind the ball carrier such that they are impeding a defender from pulling a ball carrier's flag, even if there is not contact (10 yards).
B. Illegal contact is any purposeful attempt by any player to displace an opposing player running his/her route or stationary screening (10 yards – spot foul).

STATIONARY SCREENING

Stationary screening is permitted. Screening is defined as maintaining a set position between a defender and the ball carrier. Moving screens are prohibited. The screener's arms and hands may not be extended. Moving screens as well as sticking a knee, hip, foot, elbow, arm or leg out at an opposing player is an illegal block. (Think of it in terms of screening in basketball).

STRIPPING

Stripping the ball is not allowed (Illegal contact – 10 yards).

SLEEPER PLAY

The sleeper play is illegal. All players must be at least 5 yards into the field of play from the sidelines.

SPORTSMANSHIP/ROUGHING AND OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOR

A. Officials will penalize offensive language and any taunting with a 15-yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty.
B. Coaches that verbally abuse officials will be penalized with 15-yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty. Coaches that continue to verbally abuse officials will be dismissed from the game, at the discretion of the official's, and that coach will be subject to suspension. Please refer to the Highlands Ranch Metro District Code of Conduct.
C. Only head coaches may address game officials.
D. Coaching staff is responsible for the conduct of their sidelines, including spectators.

If the field supervisor or referee witnesses any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any other unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player may be ejected from the league**.**
FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

Trash talking or taunting will not be allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. Trash talk is talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, or spectators. If trash talking occurs, the referee

will give one warning. If it continues, the player, players, coach, or spectator will be ejected from the game. **This applies to all players, coaches and spectators.**

SUMMARY OF PENALTIES:

All penalties are "repeat the down" and enforced at the line of scrimmage, except where noted otherwise.

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES

- **Offsides** – 5 yards
- **Interference/Coach Interference** – 10 yards and automatic 1st down
- **Illegal contact** (holding, blocking, diving for flag, stripping ball) – 10 yards (Spot Foul)
- **Illegal flag pull** (before player has the ball) – 10 yards (Spot Foul)
- **Illegal rushing** (starting the rush inside the 10-yard marker or rushing too early) – 5 yards
- **Taunting –** 15 yards and automatic first down
- **Defensive Unnecessary Roughness –** 15 yards and automatic first down (Spot Foul)

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES

- **Illegal motion** (more than one person moving, false start, etc.) – 5 yards
- **Offsides** – 5 yards
- **Illegal forward pass** (pass thrown once player is beyond the line of scrimmage or two forward passes) – 5 yards
- **Offensive pass interference** (illegal pick play, pushing off defender, etc) – 10 yards and loss of down.
- **Coach interference –** 10 yards and loss of down
- **Flag guarding** - 5 yards Spot Foul, the down is consumed.
- **Delay of game** – 5 yards, clock stops
- **Impeding the Defense/Blocking** – 10 yards (no flying V or walls).
- **Offensive Unnecessary Roughness** – 15 yards and loss of down (Spot Foul)
- **Diving into end-zone –** 10 yards, automatic loss of down (no touchdown)
- **Taunting** – 15 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
- **Running in the no run zone** – 5 yards

A. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from the normal run of play. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage unless otherwise noted.

B. Only the team captain or coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.

C. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.

TERMINOLOGY

• **Boundary lines** – the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and the rear end zone lines.
• **Line Of Scrimmage** – an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field
• **Line-To-Gain** – the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score
• **Rush Line** – an imaginary line (usually marked by a bean bag or a ball spotter) running across the width of the field 10 yards (into the defensive side) from the Line of Scrimmage
• **Offense** – the squad with possession of the ball
• **Defense** – the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball
• **Passer** – the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the QB
• **Rusher** – the defensive player assigned to rush the Quarterback to prevent him/her from passing by pulling his/her flags or blocking the pass
• **Downs (1-2-3-4)** – the offensive squad has four attempts or "Downs" to advance the ball. They must cross the Line to Gain to get another set of downs or to score.
• **Live Ball** – the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regards to penalties, Live Ball Penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
• **Dead Ball** – the period of time immediately before or after a play.
• **Whistle** – the sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for timeout, half time or the end of the game
• **Inadvertent whistle** – an official's whistle that is performed in error
• **Charging** – the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, chest or forearm.
• **Flag Guarding** – an act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.
• **Shovel Pass** – a legal pass attempted behind the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner
• **Lateral** – a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier
• **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language

HIGHLANDS RANCH
Metro District

Code of Conduct

CODE

1. **NO PLAYER, COACH OR SPECTATOR SHALL:** At any time lay a hand upon, shove, strike, or threaten an official, player or spectator. Officials are required to suspend said person immediately from further play and report such people to the League Director. Such person shall remain suspended until his/her case has been considered by the League Director.
   - **MINIMUM PENALTY:** Suspension for the remainder of the season, placed on probation for the remainder of the year.
   - **MAXIMUM PENALTY:** Suspension from all recreation activities for one year and probation for the following year plus at the beginning of the following year, the case is subject to review by the Highlands Ranch Metro District.

2. **NO PLAYER, COACH OR SPECTATOR SHALL:** Refuse to abide by the official's decision. Officials are required to suspend said person immediately from further play and report such person to the League Director. Such person shall remain suspended until his/her case has been considered by the League Director.
   - **MINIMUM PENALTY:** Suspension for one week from all HRMD league participation, placed on probation for the remainder of the season.
   - **MAXIMUM PENALTY:** Suspension for the remainder of the season, placed on probation for the remainder of the year.

3. **NO PLAYER, COACH OR SPECTATOR SHALL:** Be guilty of obscene gestures of objectionable demonstrations of dissent at the official's decision. Penalty: The degree of infraction of this tenet of good sportsmanship shall, in the official's judgment, draw:
   - **MINIMUM PENALTY:** Warning by the official.
   - **MAXIMUM PENALTY:** Removal from the game and suspension for up to one week from all HRMD league participation.

4. **NO PLAYER, COACH OR SPECTATOR SHALL:** Discuss with an official in any manner the decision reached by such official except the manager or captain. Penalty: The degree of infraction of this tenet of good sportsmanship shall, in the official's judgment, draw:
   - **MINIMUM PENALTY:** Warning by the official.
   - **MAXIMUM PENALTY:** Removal from the game.

5. **NO PLAYER, SHALL:** Be guilty of using unnecessarily rough tactics in the play of the game against the body and person of an opposing player. Officials are required to suspend players immediately from further play and report such players to the League Director. Such player shall remain suspended until his/her case has been considered by the League Director.
   - **MINIMUM PENALTY:** Placed on probation for the remainder of the season.
   - **MAXIMUM PENALTY:** Suspension for up to two weeks from all HRMD league participation and placed on probation for the remainder of the season.

6. **NO PLAYER, COACH OR SPECTATOR SHALL:** Be guilty of physical attack as an aggressor upon any player, official or spectator. Officials are required to suspend such person immediately from further play and report such people to the League Director. Such person shall remain suspended until his/her case has been considered by the League Director.
   - **MINIMUM PENALTY:** Suspension for up to two weeks from all HRMD league participation and placed on probation for remainder of the year.

- **MAXIMUM PENALTY:** Suspension from all recreation activities for one year and placed on probation for the following year, plus at the beginning of the following year, his/her case is subject to review by the Highlands Ranch Metro District.

7. **NO PLAYER, COACH OR SPECTATOR SHALL:** Be guilty of an abusive verbal attack upon any player, official or spectator. The officials are required to suspend any person immediately from further play and report such person to the League Director. Such person shall remain suspended until his/her case has been considered by the League Director.
   - **MINIMUM PENALTY:** Suspension for one week from all HRMD league participation and placed on probation for the remainder of the season.
   - **MAXIMUM PENALTY:** Suspension for the remainder of the season and placed on probation for the remainder of the year.

8. **NO PLAYER, COACH OR SPECTATOR SHALL:** Sit in the stands before or after their games and harass or heckle other teams or game officials.
   - **MINIMUM PENALTY:** Warning from the field supervisor.
   - **MAXIMUM PENALTY:** Removal from the ballpark and suspension for up to one week from all HRMD league games.

9. **SMOKING, CHEWING TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL POLICY –** There shall be no smoking, no chewing tobacco use, and no alcohol use by coaches, players, or spectators during their teams' practices and games.

ENFORCEMENT'S

1. Any individual being placed on probation for the remainder of the season and reported again for violating the Code of Conduct may be suspended for the remainder of the season.

2. The suspended individual must remove himself/herself immediately from the confines of the contest areas as designated by the Field Supervisor.

3. If a suspended individual does not remove himself/herself form the confines of the contest area, the Field Supervisor shall call the authorities.

4. One-minute clause: One minute shall be allowed for suspended individual to remove himself or herself from the designated area. If this time limit expires, the contest shall be forfeited to the opponents.

5. Any individual on probation who violates the Code of Conduct will be placed on suspension until their case can be heard by the League Director.

6. Any individual wishing to appeal the decision reached by the Field Supervisor and League Director should do so by calling the Highlands Ranch Metro District to set up an appointment to discuss the decision reached.

Coaches Tips

- Coaches are encouraged to have a parent only meeting to review rules and how parents should conduct themselves during practices and games
- Coaches are encouraged to read the rules to players
- Once your games and practices are over, please pick up your trash so we can keep our fields clean.

Coaching Resources:
https://nflflag.com/coaches/football-drills
http://positivecoach.org