



# 2024 - 2025 WA State 7v7 Flag Football Rules

Photo Courtesy of Jim Wilkerson, Tahoma Photography, @jmwahomaphoto

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p><b>7-v-7 Rules Summary, Pages 2-3</b></p> <p><b>Rule 1: General Administration, Pages 4-7</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Governing Philosophy: Inclusive Sport</li> <li>2. Game Officials</li> <li>3. Personal Conduct</li> <li>4. Team Conduct</li> <li>5. Rosters</li> <li>6. Field Layout</li> <li>7. Field Diagram</li> <li>8. <b>Championship Games</b></li> </ol> <p><b>Rule 2: Uniform and Equipment, Pages 8-10</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General</li> <li>2. Safety</li> <li>3. Flag and Flag Belts</li> <li>4. Team Shirts</li> <li>5. Uniform / Ball / Gear Issues</li> <li>6. <b>Inclement Weather / Additional Uniform Guidance</b></li> </ol> <p><b>Rule 3: Clock Mechanics, Page 11</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General Timing Procedures</li> <li>2. Clock Operations</li> </ol> <p><b>Rule 4: Coin Toss, Page 12</b></p> <p><b>Rule 5: Scoring, Pages 12-15</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scoring Chart</li> <li>2. Point After Touchdown (PAT)</li> <li>3. Safeties</li> <li>4. Onside Play</li> <li>5. Mercy Rule</li> </ol> <p><b>Rule 6: Challenge Procedure, Page 15</b></p> <p><b>Rule 7-: Offense, Pages 15-20</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General Offense</li> <li>2. Blocking</li> <li>3. Legal Screening</li> <li>4. Illegal Screening</li> <li>5. Fumbles / Muffs</li> <li>6. Running / Jumping / Diving</li> <li>7. Pass-Only / No-Run Zones</li> <li>8. Flag Guarding / Stiff Arming</li> <li>9. Pass Plays</li> <li>10. Batting</li> <li>11. Intentional Grounding</li> <li>12. Catches</li> <li>13. Punting</li> </ol>	<p><b>Rule 8: Defense, Pages 21-23</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General Defense</li> <li>2. Blitzing the Passer</li> <li>3. Roughing the Passer</li> <li>4. Flag Pulling Mechanics</li> <li>5. Pass Coverage / Interference</li> <li>6. Interceptions</li> </ol> <p><b>Rule 9: Overtime, Page 24</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General Overtime Rules</li> <li>2. Penalty Enforcement During Overtime</li> </ol> <p><b>Rule 10: Officiating, Pages 25-31</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Right of Place (ROP)</li> <li>2. Right of Way (ROW)</li> <li>3. Blitzer</li> <li>4. Holding</li> <li>5. Momentum Rule</li> <li>6. Marking / Spotting the Spot</li> <li>7. Forfeits / Ending the Game</li> <li>8. Cool Down Period</li> <li>9. Disqualifications and Ejections</li> <li>10. Unsportsmanlike Conduct</li> <li>11. Contact in a Minimal Contact League / Rough Play</li> <li>12. Fighting</li> <li>13. Bench Fouls and Warnings</li> <li>14. Inadvertent Whistle</li> <li>15. Unfair Acts Rule</li> <li>16. Last Player Rule and Penalty</li> <li>17. Illegal Formations</li> <li>18. Illegal Participation</li> <li>19. Pace of Play</li> <li>20. <b>5v5 Alterations</b></li> <li>21. Thunder and Lightning Protocol / Uncontrollable Events</li> </ol> <p><b>Penalty Chart, Page 32-39</b></p> <p><i><b>Flag Football is an evolving, emerging sport.</b></i></p> <p><i><b>This rule book is updated approximately every six months to reflect the evolution.</b></i></p> <p><i><b>Please dispose of previous editions to avoid confusion.</b></i></p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## 7-on-7 Flag Football Rules Summary

### Overview

- This is 7-on-7, minimal-contact, non-blocking, legal backfield-screening, free-release flag football.
- The most general rule of the game is to avoid contact that is judged to be significant or forceful.
- Players cannot make contact that is judged as gratuitous, deliberate, or incites roughness.
- Players are responsible for controlling their bodies and having exceptional awareness of the space around them. Players that ignore proper control or awareness are acting recklessly and are not viewed favorably.
- Each player, coach and official must regulate contact through self-control, training, and enforcement.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct and egregious personal fouls are accompanied by a cool down period at a minimum.
- Player’s waist-worn flags must meet specifications, be legally worn and capturable.
- Fields are 30-yards wide and a minimum of 50 yards long (plus end zones).
- Fields have two lines-to-gain. Pass-Only / No-Run Zones are five yards from each goal line (see diagram).
- Teams will have four downs to gain a first down by achieving a line-to-gain.
- Once across a line-to-gain teams are awarded a new set of downs, teams will have four downs to achieve the next line-to-gain or score unless awarded an automatic-first-down by penalty.
- Pass-Only / No-Run Zones: Offenses must execute a forward pass that breaks the line-of-scrimmage. \*Rule 7.1.9
- All players are eligible receivers.
- Officials will mark the ball where the ball was at the time it became dead, not where the flag was pulled.
- An “onside play” is available in the final two minutes of the second half.

### Clock Operations

Length of Game	Periods	Halftime	Time outs	“stop clock” or “pro clock”
40 minutes	Two 20-minute halves	Two minutes	Three per contest (one minute each)  (except during championship series)	In the final two minutes of the second half (for awarded 1 <sup>st</sup> downs in final 2-minutes of first half)

### Offense

- The play clock is 40 seconds from the end of the previous play or 25 seconds from the Ready-to-Play whistle.
- Snaps must be made between the center’s legs (pistol, shot gun or under center).
- A seven second “play clock” will be used, beginning when the ball leaves the ground at the Snap.
- The Passer must hand off or pass the ball off before the play clock expires or the play is a “sack” (the ball will be returned to scrimmage and the down is consumed).
- Physical-contact blocking is not allowed.
- Offensive players are given Right-Of-Place (ROP) if they remain still after the snap. ROP is a higher precedent (*i.e. defeats*) Right of Way (ROW).
- Legal screen blocking is allowed only behind the line of scrimmage.
- The player taking the snap (Passer) cannot run the ball through scrimmage unless the ball clearly released and touched by the defense (tipped ball) and returned to their possession.
- Any player other than the player taking the snap may run the ball through scrimmage.
- On fourth down teams must decide if they want to “Punt or Play”.
- If they “Play” and fail, the opposing team takes the ball from the succeeding spot.
- If they declare “Punt” the ball will move the ball to the opponent’s 5-yard line, change of possession.
- No physical kicking is allowed. An official will simply move the ball to the 5-yard line.
- Ball carriers may use any number of backward passes and legal pitches anywhere on the field.
- Fumbles, passes, muffs and bad snaps are dead when (not always where) they hit the ground.

- Ball carriers can leave their feet, jump, and spin if they don't put other players' safety at risk.
- Ball carriers may not dive or hurdle to advance the ball.
- Ball carriers may extend the ball in front of them to gain additional yardage.
- Ball carriers may not physically deny defenders the opportunity to capture their flag (flag guarding).

**Defense**

- Defenders must make all reasonable efforts to minimize contact while capturing an opponent's flag.
- The game is "free release", defenders cannot "chuck", "jam", "bump", "press", etc., a receiver. They may place a hand on the receiver to "find or track" them if they do not restrict, redirect or delay their opponent.
- Before a legal snap a Blitz Line will be set 7-yards from the line-of-scrimmage.
- Up to two defensive players may declare Right-Of-Way (ROW) by a clear and obvious hand signal, pre-snap.
- ROW may not be materially impeded on their path to the line-of-scrimmage in the direction of the initial position of the Passer, not to the Passer themselves (i.e., if the Passer moves after the snap).
- ROP defeats ROW.
- After crossing scrimmage, defenders may be legally screened in the backfield.
- Other defenders not 7-yards from scrimmage at the snap may enter the backfield once the ball is passed or handed off or clearly touches another player. However, they will not have ROW.
- Stripping / attempting to strip (including punching the ball) from a player is illegal.
- Defenders may safely dive to capture an opponent's flag. They must avoid significant or impactful contact.
- Defenders may not use their hands, arms, etc. to displace a screen blocker (i.e., push out of the way, clear a path, shoot a gap in the offensive line). Defenders must work around a screening opponent.

**Scoring**

<b>Touchdown</b>	7 points from the midfield mark and beyond 6 points less than the midfield mark
<b>Point After Touchdown (PAT) Attempts</b>	Captain can accept a free "granted" 1 point PAT (no try needed) <b>OR</b> attempt an actual PAT: 2 points from the 10-yard line, run or pass 3 points from the 17-yard line, run or pass
<b>Safety</b>	2 points will be awarded to the defense and possession of the ball at the 5-yard line (going out)
<b>Interceptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interceptions are live balls and may be returned for a score. This may result in a defensive touchdown and follow-on PAT attempt.</li> <li>• Interceptions returned to the opponent's end zone during PAT attempts are worth two points regardless of the value of the PAT attempted.</li> <li>• Interceptions in overtime periods are dead ball, no possibility of scoring.</li> </ul>
<b>Forfeits</b>	Recorded as 30-0
<b>Mercy Rule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mercy rule will be invoked if the score differential is 30 or more points in the second half.</li> <li>• When the mercy rule is invoked, the score shall be locked and the contest may continue as a scrimmage if both coaches agree and show sportsmanship. No timeouts will be granted.</li> </ul>

**Overtime**

In the regular season, if regulation time ends in a tie, teams will conduct **ONE** three-consecutive-play PAT try series before a ties is declared. In playoffs, the try series will be repeated until a winner is determined.

## **RULE 1: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

### **1. Governing Philosophy: Inclusive Sport**

- 1) Flag football is available to an array of body-types, skill-levels, ages and genders.
- 2) Participants must respect one another's dignity and value regardless of gender, ethnicity, creed, social status, religious choice, demographic, sexual or political orientation or their choices in self-determination.
- 3) Flag football is a non-aggressive game of finesse, not the impact game of tackle football.
- 4) Flag football is not an introduction to tackle ball, although can be played as a developmental tool for players seeking to play tackle football.
- 5) Flag football is a unique sport with its own unique skill sets, strategy, faster paced and shorter game than tackle football.
- 6) Flag football is played on five continents and will debut at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.
- 7) Our rules are a conscious effort to evolve and move toward international and professional standards and the evolution of the sport.
- 8) The most general rule of the game is to avoid contact that is judged to be significant or impactful.
- 9) Waist-worn flags must meet legal specifications, worn legally, assessable, and easy to capture.
- 10) We retain the right to amend, update or edit rules as needed in real time. Rulebooks can't account for every possible situation. Game officials have the right to interpret the intent of any rule as situations require and are not bound by the choice of wording by the author. They are bound by their best judgement and experience.
- 11) When more details are needed than are outlined in this Rule Book, game officials will defer to the most current National Federation of High Schools Football Rule Book.
- 12) The league's Technical Delegate has the final say on all points of order dealing with writing and interpreting rules and the field of play. All other issues remain the purview of the Commissioner / Athletic Director.
- 13) Reasonable accommodation requests (medical, physical, mental, adaptive, religious, etc..) must be made in writing to the school's athletic director as soon as feasible, pre-contest.
- 14) Coaches and players are responsible for knowing and adhering to the rules and the spirit of the game.
- 15) This rule book is a continuously evolving document. Your feedback is appreciated. Send comments or questions to our Editorial Committee Chairman: [daveralston2007@yahoo.com](mailto:daveralston2007@yahoo.com)

### **2. Game Officials**

- 1) Game officials must consistently demonstrate decorum and courtesy.
- 2) Officials must project a healthy, organized and well-kept appearance in their self, uniform and equipment.
- 3) Game officials must be treated with respect.
- 4) Any rude, offensive, or aggressive remarks / gestures which may incite players, non-player or spectators is considered unsportsmanlike and worthy of penalty, disqualification, ejection, or forfeiture.
- 5) Officials administer the rules of this league not any other organization past or present.
- 6) Our officials are encouraged to use the "preventative style" of officiating which allows them to talk to, remind and help players avoid violations whenever feasible. Cautions and teaching points are appropriate many times.
- 7) It is not the mission of game officials to penalize every small, nuanced infraction of tackle football rules or other insignificant issues that do not produce an unfair advantage.

### 3. Personal Conduct

- 1) Our facilities are not a public space. Players and spectators are allowed in the facility by invitation and that invitation may be revoked for failure to play or act appropriately.
- 2) Game officials, players and non-players must comply with the facility's rules.
- 3) Any staff member who hears or sees anything that in their judgment is an infraction of the required personal conduct standards may require the person responsible to leave the event.
- 4) If a player or non-player fails to comply with staff requests, staff has the authority to forfeit the game and / or have that individual(s) removed from the complex.
- 5) No one can needlessly or overtly act or engage with game officials to complain, question calls or no-calls, harass, hassle, pester, badger, bait or otherwise delay, hamper, or impede the flow of the game. This is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and brings discredit upon the individual.
- 6) By participating in the league, team players and leadership have agreed to allow game officials to do their jobs unencumbered. To interfere with that agreement is unsportsmanlike conduct.
- 7) Players, spectators, and officials must avoid profanity.
- 8) Disrespectful language; racist, sexist, homophobic remarks; obscene or threatening gestures / behavior; and bullying are prohibited by anyone attending an event.
- 9) Abhorrent behavior will lead to an immediate disqualification or ejection, possible suspension, or a lifetime exclusion. Abhorrent is defined as foul, obnoxious, threatening or disgusting in speech, gesture or actions.
- 10) Foul play will not be tolerated.
- 11) Alcohol, intoxicants, tobacco products, vaping, weapons, and drones are prohibited on or near the field of play.
- 12) For safety reasons; recording, broadcasting and photographic devices may not be on the field of play. They may be on the sidelines (within the coach's sideline area or 10-yards outside the End Line) at the discretion of the head official.

### 4. Team Conduct

- 1) Intentionally violating rules is a disgrace, unsportsmanlike and a travesty of the game.
- 2) Feigning an injury or other distractions are dishonest, unethical, and unsportsmanlike.
- 3) Feigning, distracting, or 'flopping' are unfair acts makes a travesty of the game.
- 4) Teams wearing and using legal equipment are given more freedom than those without.
- 5) For the safety of our officials and their ability to administer the game all team personnel and spectators must remain at least two yards off the sidelines.
- 6) Players or non-players significantly entering the field of play are calling a team time-out through their actions and a time-out will be charged in accordance with the rules.
- 7) Our staff will determine where spectators can and cannot observe from and will err on the side of safety for our players and game officials.
- 8) Officials may require audio players or other noise-producing devices be turned off or eliminated as they may interfere with the official's ability to communicate and administer the game.

## 5. Rosters

- 1) Only players on an officially approved roster may participate. For a school district sanctioned game, district rules will apply in all cases dealing with rosters.
- 2) There is not a minimum regular season games players must have played to be eligible for playoffs.
- 3) All players / guardians must sign a liability waiver before participating. All waivers must be signed during the regular season. They will be rejected once the regular season ends.
- 4) The roster protest must be made to the senior official on site prior to the contest.
- 5) All players are required to have picture identification readily available to aid in roster protest.
- 6) Failure to produce picture identification will result in the protest being granted.
- 7) If an ineligible player (example: not rostered, disqualified from the current game or ejected from the immediate previous game) is discovered participating in a live ball play, that team will forfeit the game and the Unfair Act is assessed to the team Coach.
- 8) Teams may play two players down to avoid a forfeit. The opposing team is not required to “adjust down” when a team cannot field the required number of players but may do so to show sportsmanship.

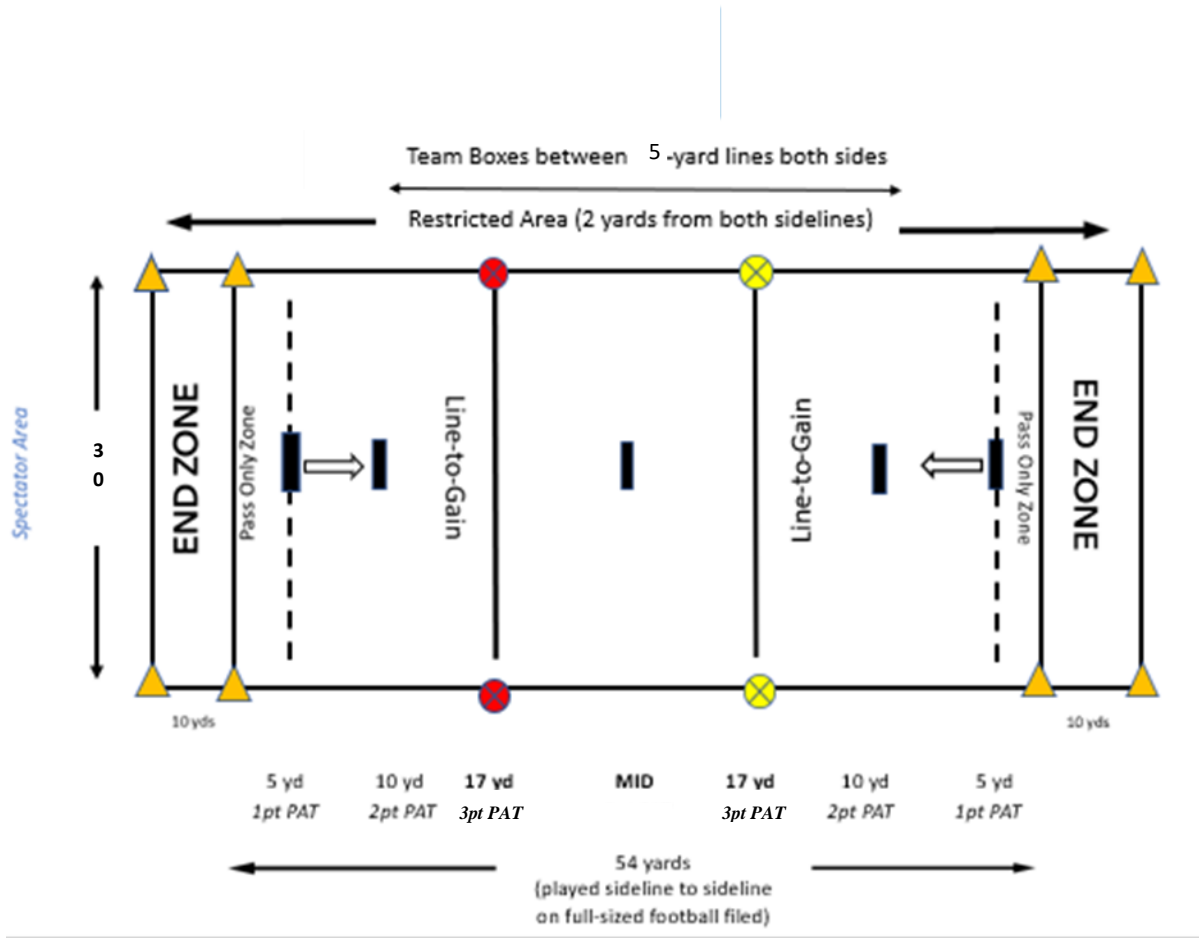
## 6. Field Layout

- 1) Fields are 30 yards wide and a minimum of 50 yards long (plus end zones).
- 2) Team boxes are established well off the sidelines and between the 5-yard lines.
- 3) Players and non-players must remain in the established team boxes.
- 4) No player or non-player may be in the restricted area during a live ball. This area is 2- yards wide from the sidelines.
- 5) Coaches, staff or non-players that enter the field-of-play more than 3-yards will be granted an automatic time-out charged to that team’s sideline. Control your sidelines.
- 6) Teams will have designated separate sidelines, wherever feasible.
- 7) The designated “home” team will have first choice of sideline.
- 8) Each team will pass through one five yard deep “Pass-Only / No-Run Zones” as indicated by the directional arrows on the field diagram.
- 9) Most possessions will begin on the 5-yard line and marked with a visual aid.
- 10) The ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line after a safety, unless moved by penalty.
- 11) There are two lines-to-gain where teams may be awarded a new set of downs.
- 12) A colored disc cone or other visual aid will mark where the “Pass-Only / No-Run Zones” begin.
- 13) Other visual aids will be used to mark lines-to-gain, PAT distances and end zone boundaries.



Photo Courtesy of Jim Wilkerson, Tahoma Photography, @jmw tahomaphoto

## 7-. Field Diagram



## 8. Championship Games:

- 1) Championship games are best two-out-of-three, 20-minute games normally played on the same day.
- 2) Two twenty-minute games will be played with a 5-minute break between the games.
- 3) If the series is tied after two games there will be a 5-minute break, and a third 20-minute contest will occur to determine a champion.
- 4) Teams will have one 60-second timeout per 20-minute contest.
- 5) A coin toss will determine first possession in the first contest.
- 6) The winner of the coin toss of the first contest may elect to start on Offense, Defense or Defer their choice to the second contest. Teams may only defer in the Championship game not other games in the season.
- 7) If the winner of the coin toss for first contest elects to start on Offense, the loser of the toss will automatically begin the second contest on Offense, unless they give up that right before the second game.
- 8) If a third contest is needed, the coin toss will be replaced with a 'furthest throw' contest with the Away team deciding which team throws first.



## RULE 2: UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

### 1. General

- 1) A complete team pre-game player / equipment inspection **must** be conducted.
- 2) Teams wearing and using legal equipment are given more freedom than those without. Players or teams that do not conform to uniform standards are not viewed positively.
- 3) Keeping a player's uniform legal throughout the entire contest is the player's responsibility.
- 4) Teammates should observe and assist each other to stay legal.

### 2. Safety

- 1) A protective intra-oral mouthpiece must be worn. The mouthpiece must be a visible, non-white color. Transparent mouthguards are not legal, as officials cannot determine if the player is legal.
- 2) No part of the mouthpiece may extend more than ½" out of the mouth.
- 3) Snugly fitting pants, shorts or a sports skirt **without pockets** are required. Compression-style garments work best.
- 4) Belt loops, exposed zippers, or exposed draw strings are prohibited and not allowed on the field.
- 5) Players may not wear unyielding or stiff material items that in the judgment of the officials may present a hazard to other players (ex: helmets, unyielding pads, etc.)
- 6) Casts and braces must be padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than ½-inch thick. The type used by doctors.
- 7) Players must wear closed-toed shoes. Cleats with exposed metal are not allowed.
- 8) Players may wear eye protection to include prescription glasses or flexible sunglasses if they are secured with a head band/strap.
- 9) Players may wear a face shield molded to the face to protect against facial injury.
- 10) Jewelry that might endanger players must be removed before playing or taped to the body. This includes looped or dangling piercings, chains, religious medallions, etc. Stud piercings are normally approved.
- 11) Players may wear stocking-style caps, soft-shelled rugby-style scrum hats or religious head dress if it presents no quantifiable / reasonable / articulable hazard to their opponent or unfair advantage. Baseball caps can be worn backward. Hard unyielding substances are prohibited.
- 12) Any player who is bleeding, has an open wound or has any material amount of blood on their clothing or body will be directed to leave the field until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, or the clothing is changed.
- 13) Players with long hair that reaches near the belt line are encouraged to legally secure (bun-style, tucked in hat or jersey, etc.) their hair to avoid pulling or injury.

### 3. Flags and Flag Belts

#### General Guidance

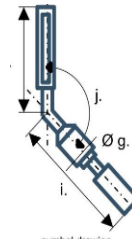
- 1) It is the player's responsibility to ensure flags are easily assessable and capturable.
- 2) Failure to ensure flags are easily assessable and capturable will result in a dead ball situation.
- 3) Flags must be clearly visible, hang freely and not covered by the players' shirt, uniform or hair.
- 4) Failure to ensure visible, hanging, or uncovered flags will result in a dead ball situation.

- 5) Excess tightening strap at the belt buckle must be either cut away or rolled and taped.
- 6) One-hand touch requirements for missing, incomplete, or incorrectly worn flag belts used in previous seasons are no longer valid.
- 7) Flags cannot be of similar color as a player's pants/shorts or leggings. Similar is at the official's discretion.
- 8) Flag belts must be worn as designed and be free of obstructions or alterations.
- 9) Altered or tampered with flags could result in an ejection or forfeiture.
- 10) Nothing can be around the waist except the legal flag belt (no gloves, towels, playbooks, dangling excess belt length, etc.)

## Specifications

- 1) Players must wear a **tightly, fixed** flag belt at the waist.
- 2) The waist is defined as: halfway between the bottom of the ribs and the top of the hip bones just above the navel.
- 3) Flags must be worn tight enough to remain on the player's waist during the entire play.
- 4) **The entire belt, including any excess strap, must be secured tightly.**
- 5) It's the player's responsibility to ensure the flag belt is tight and doesn't materially shift.
- 6) Failure to ensure a tight flag belt will result in a dead ball situation.
- 7) Flag belts must have two "pop-sockets", one worn on each hip area, and two identical flags.
- 8) Flags sockets must be worn down and away from the body. **See diagram.**

*The flat part connected to belt  
must be  
**Against the Body  
(Down and Away)***



- 9) Flags must hang from a waist belt and be a minimum of 1.5" wide and no less than 14" long (measured from the belt).
- 10) Variances of specifications must be approved by the presiding head official pre-game.
- 11) The determining factor for approval is: does the variance produce an unfair advantage?

## 4. Team Shirts

- 1) Players must strive to wear similarly colored shirts/jerseys. The head official determines if a player's shirt is within playability/officiating standards.
- 2) It is not permitted to wear jackets, rain gear, etc., as an outer garment while on the field. These items often have zippers or sharp edges that are a safety concern.
- 3) Players must ensure their shirts are compression-style, fitted, tailored or long enough to remain tucked in during the entire play and tight enough not to interfere with capturing the flag.
- 4) **Alternatively, players may legally knot their shirt (tied or taped) in the small of their back, above the flag belt but not higher than their navel. The knot may not interfere with an opponent capturing the flag. Knots must be in a manner that avoids displays of excessive skin and shows athletic decorum.**

- 5) Shirts that are untucked or unknotted at any point will not be seen favorably by game officials and may result in a dead ball situation.
- 6) Coaches are responsible for having alternate-colored shirts or pennies on hand in case of teams wearing similar colored jerseys. Simple black or white T-shirts will usually suffice.

## 5. Uniform / Ball / Gear Issues

- 1) Players must wear pants, shorts or an athletic skirt of a single color except small logos or branding.
- 2) Pants, shorts or athletic skirt must fit snugly. Excessive material may not hinder capturing an opponent's flag.
- 3) Compression-style fitted / tailored uniforms and gear are in the best spirit of the sport.
- 4) Players may wear a headband made of non-abrasive material.
- 5) Players may use rubber or elastic bands in their hair.
- 6) Players may tape forearms, hands, and fingers.
- 7) Elbow pads, etc., may be permitted at the game official's discretion.
- 8) Teams may provide their own game ball but subject to the official's inspection and discretion.
- 9) Footballs must be black, brown or tan, properly inflated and be pebble-grained leather, rubber-covered or composite and be manufacturer marked either Youth or Size 7.
- 10) Team Captains are required to bring their game balls to the coin toss for inspection.
- 11) If a team does not have their own legal game ball both teams will play with the other team's ball.

## 6. Inclement Weather / Additional Uniform Guidance

Generally Allowed	Generally Not Allowed
	Pants with pockets.
Compression-style fitted / tailored uniforms and gear are in the best spirit of the sport.	Non-form fitting (baggy or bulky) clothing that may hinder capturing a player's flag.
Leggings, tights or other compression-styled garments may be worn under the player's uniform.	Non-form fitting pants, snow-styled clothing that may hinder capturing a player's flag.
Hoodies / sweatshirts / thermals underneath, etc., under a player's uniform jersey.	Pants / shorts / hoodies, etc., with excessive material, draw strings, zippers, pockets, or belt loops that may hinder capturing an opponent's flag or be a safety hazard.
Gloves.	Waist worn towel, hand warmer, muff, playbook, etc. (nothing can be worn around the waist except the player's flags).
Soft stocking / ski caps. Baseball-styled hats (must be worn backward).	Hard / Unyielding headgear.
Soft earmuffs / sports headband / secured and tucked neckerchief.	Unsecured / loose items that may be a safety hazard.
Balaclava, turtleneck, dickie or other head, face, throat covering.	Unsecured / loose items that may be a safety hazard.
Prescription or protective glasses (must be secured to head with band or string).	Ski / Snow-styled goggles.
Jackets, coats, rain gear, etc., as an outer garment while on the sidelines.	Jackets, coats, rain gear, etc., as an outer garment while on the field of play.

## **RULE 3: CLOCK MECHANICS**

### **1. General Timing Procedures**

- 1) Games are 40 minutes long (two 20-minute halves).
- 2) The game clock will start on the referee's whistle to start both halves.
- 3) Officials may stop the clock as needed.
- 4) Halftime is two-minutes.
- 5) Each team will have three time-outs for the contest. Unused timeouts in the second half will not rollover to any overtime period(s). The exception is during a Championship Series.
- 6) Timeouts are 60 seconds. After 60 seconds the official will audibly place the offense on a 25-second play clock.
- 7) Coaches are warned that significantly entering the field (5-yards or more) during dead ball situations may trigger an official to call a charged time-out called on their behalf.
- 8) Teams are encouraged to yell "clock?" or "clock check?" in lieu of "time?" to avoid confusion when requesting a team timeout.
- 9) The clock will run continuously during both halves unless a team timeout is used or play is stopped by an official (example: deal with an injury, challenge, referee conference, first down achieved in the last two minutes of the first half, etc.).
- 10) A "stop-clock" or "pro-clock" will be in effect in the final two minutes of the second half if the score differential is less than 30 points.
- 11) Officials will give a verbal two-minute warning as close as possible to the actual two-minute mark of each half but will not interrupt a live play.
- 12) The warning in the first half will not stop the clock, it is only a courtesy.
- 13) The warning in the second half will stop the clock.
- 14) The time remaining will be announced after every play inside the final two minutes of each half.
- 15) The clock will not run during point-after-touchdown attempts (PATs) or Onside Play attempts in the final two minutes of the game.

### **2. Clock Operations**

- 1) The offense has a 25-second play clock to snap the ball before a delay of game penalty is assessed.
- 2) No half can end if there is an obvious timing error, or any other irregularity has occurred.
- 3) When officials go to the "stop clock" or pro clock mechanic the clock will stop / start:
  - a. Defense gains possession of the ball / on the snap
  - b. Inadvertent whistle / at the ready
  - c. Incomplete passes / on the snap
  - d. Offense achieves a first down / on the snap
  - e. Out-of-bounds plays with a player in possession of the ball / on the snap
  - f. Intentionally fumbled or thrown out out-of-bounds or to the ground by a ball carrier / on the ready
  - g. Penalty administration (other than Delay of Game) / depends on previous play.
  - h. Delay of game / on the ready
  - i. Referee timeout /at the referee's discretion
  - j. Team timeout / on the snap

- k. Injury / when player is removed from field (depending on the status of clock on previous play) (player must leave the field for one play)
- 1. Touchdown / on the next snap after the PAT attempt. PATs and Onside Plays are untimed downs during stop/pro clock mechanics.
- 4) Clock runoffs for penalties that occur inside “stop clock” mechanics do not apply in this league.
- 5) The clock will stop for awarded first downs inside the last two minutes of the first half and start on the snap.

**RULE 4: COIN TOSS**

- 1) A maximum of three team representatives may participate in the coin toss ceremony.
- 2) Prior to the coin toss the Referee will confirm that the teams are prepared to play in a sportsmanlike manner and are properly and legally equipped.
- 3) First possession is decided using a coin toss. The away team will make the call.
- 4) The team winning the toss shall choose one of the following options:
  - a. Begin on offense.
  - b. Begin on defense.
  - c. Designate which goal their team will defend / which direction they want to drive.
- 5) The loser of the coin toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.
- 6) The team that started the game on offense will start the second half on defense.
- 7) Teams will play in the opposite direction in the first half and the second half.
- 8) To keep to schedule, the game clock shall start one minute after the coin toss formalities have ended whether the teams have taken the field or not.

**RULE 5: SCORING**

<b>Touchdown</b>	7 points from the midfield mark and beyond 6 points less than the midfield mark
<b>Point After Touchdown (PAT) Attempts</b>	Captain can accept a free “granted” 1 point PAT (no try needed) <b>OR</b> attempt an actual PAT: 2 points from the 10-yard line, run or pass 3 points from the 17-yard line, run or pass
<b>Safety</b>	2 points will be awarded to the defense and possession of the ball at the 5-yard line (going out)
<b>Interceptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interceptions are live balls and may be returned for a score. This may result in a defensive touchdown and follow-on PAT attempt.</li> <li>• Interceptions returned to the opponent’s end zone during PAT attempts are worth two points regardless of the value of the PAT attempted.</li> <li>• Interceptions in overtime periods are dead ball, no possibility of scoring.</li> </ul>
<b>Forfeits</b>	Recorded as 30-0
<b>Mercy Rule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mercy rule will be invoked if the score differential is 30 or more points in the second half.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When the mercy rule is invoked, the score shall be locked and the contest may continue as a scrimmage if both coaches agree and show sportsmanship. No timeouts will be granted.</li> </ul>
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## 2. Point After Touchdown (PAT)

- 1) Following a touchdown, once the scoring team’s Coach/Speaking Captain has informed an official of which point conversion choice they want to attempt and the ball is either spotted, the lead official has announced the choice or the ready-to-play whistle is blown, the decision cannot be changed unless a team (either offense or defense) uses a team timeout.
- 2) If a penalty occurs during an extra point attempt, the penalty will be assessed but the extra point value remains the same.
- 3) Point conversion choices cannot be changed after a penalty.
- 4) Personal and unsportsmanlike fouls by the defense on a successful PAT are enforced on the next possession, or next spot in overtime periods.
- 5) Fouls committed by the offense on a successful PAT will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed, unless the penalty comes with a loss-of-down.
- 6) Fouls committed by the offense on an unsuccessful PAT will be declined by rule (exception: personal and unsportsmanlike fouls).
- 7) Fouls by the offense during a PAT attempt that carry a loss-of-down penalty (flag guarding, illegal advancement, illegal pass, etc.) will result in the PAT being “no good” and the attempt will not be repeated.
- 8) Fouls by the defense during an unsuccessful PAT attempt will result in a retry after the options are administered. The offense may opt to accept or decline penalty yardage before the retry.
- 9) Interceptions on PATs during regulation time may be returned by the defense for 2-points. Interceptions during overtime are ruled dead ball.

### Fouls During PAT attempts

	Successful Attempt	Unsuccessful Attempt	Penalties That Carry Loss-of-Down	Unsportsmanlike And Personal Fouls
<b>Foul by the Offense</b>	Yardage assessed, Retry the attempt	Attempt no good, no retry	Attempt no good, no retry	Carries over to the next possession
<b>Foul by the Defense</b>	Declined, attempt is good	Yardage assessed, Retry the attempt	Not applicable	Carries over to the next possession

## 3. Safeties (*Team A is the team that initiated the snap. Team B is the team that began the play on defense*)

- 1) A Safety occurs when:
  - a. A’s ball hits the ground (fumble/muffed snap) in, or out of the sides or back of their endzone.
  - b. A’s ball carrier has their flag pulled in their end zone (and the entire ball is still in the end zone).

- c. A's ball carrier goes out-of-bounds behind their own goal line.
- d. Team A commits a spot foul inside their own end zone.

Note: When passer throws the ball away it will be returned to scrimmage and the down is consumed. The foul of Intentional Grounding has been eliminated.

2) Team B exceptions:

- a. A flag pull immediately after an interception by Team B in the end zone is a touchback, not a Safety.
- b. Team B player going out-of-bounds behind the goal line immediately after an interception in the end zone is a touchback, not a Safety.
- c. If the ball is intercepted by Team B in the end zone and Team B fouls or fumbles in the end zone before the ball is brought back into the field-of-play (example: flag guarding, screening, etc.), the result of the play is a touchback, and the foul will be administered from the touchback spot. This will not result in a Safety.
- d. If the ball is intercepted Team B between the 5-yard line and the goal line and the player's momentum takes them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead in Team B's possession or Team B fouls in the end zone (example: flag guarding, screening, etc.), the ball belongs to Team B and the penalty will be assessed from the spot where it was intercepted. It is a touchback. It is not a Safety.

#### 4. Onside Play

- 1) This option is only available during the final two minutes of the second half and only immediately after a team has scored and completed their PAT attempt (successful or unsuccessful). The score must be either tied or the most recent scoring team is still behind.
- 2) This is an untimed down.
- 3) This option is not available after the trailing team has scored a safety.
- 4) This option is never available to the team ahead in points.
- 5) After the trailing team has scored and completed the PAT attempt, the team Coach of the trailing team must inform the game officials they intend to attempt an onside play.
- 6) The ball is placed at the offensive team's 5-yard line, going out.
- 7) The one play is treated like a fourth down play including the assessment of penalties.
- 8) The offense must advance the ball to or past midfield after all live ball penalties have been assessed to retain the ball.
- 9) Dead ball penalties will not be considered in determining if the line-to-gain was achieved.
- 10) If a defensive penalty carrying an automatic-first-down occurs the offense will receive the penalty yardage and repeat the down if necessary. The offense will not *automatically* retain the ball.
- 11) If the offense retains the ball, the next zone-line-to-gain will be established, and clock operations will go back to normal "stop clock" procedures.
- 12) If the offense is unsuccessful with its onside play attempt, the defense will take possession of the ball at mid-field unless the attempt end up as an interception. In this case, the defense will retain the ball the succeeding sport. Interception during a Onside Play may be returned to the end zone for six points and a PAT attempt.
- 13) There are multiple onside plays available in a game as long as the provisions of lines 1-5 of this section are still valid.

## 5. Mercy Rule

- 1) The mercy rule will be invoked if the score differential is 30 or more points at any point in the second half.
- 2) The final score will be recorded as the score at the time the mercy rule was invoked.
- 3) When the mercy rule is invoked, the contest may continue as a scrimmage if both coaches agree and show sportsmanship and the head official agrees. No timeouts will be granted.

## RULE 6: CHALLENGE PROCEDURE

- 1) Only the team Coach / Speaking Captain may ask game officials about rule clarification and interpretations. Other players or personnel may be interpreted as a Delay of Game tactic.
- 2) Generally, officials are happy to answer quick questions during the game if they do not impede the game. The priority is to spot the ball then address questions without impeding the play clock.
- 3) If a team Coach / Speaking Captain believes an official has made a procedural or rule interpretation error, they may call for a timeout. If the head official agrees that there has been a procedural or rule interpretation error (example: wrong down, incorrect penalty yardage, improper rule interpretation, score recorded incorrectly, etc.), the error will be addressed, and the timeout will not be charged.
- 4) Coaches or team captains that wish to challenge a rule interpretation must have the rule book in-hand and be able to share the rule with the covering official in an expeditious manner to plead their case.
- 5) The challenge must be made to an official before the next snap.
- 6) If a team Coach / Speaking Captain loses a procedural challenge, and the team did not possess a legal team timeout, a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed to the team Coach. If a Coach receives two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, they will be disqualified.
- 7) Only procedural issues may be addressed, not an official's judgment call or no call.
- 8) If a player or non-player chooses to argue/challenge a point without calling timeout they may be assessed a Delay of Game penalty if, in the covering official judgement, the argument/challenge is done as a delaying tactic or delays the "ready to play" whistle. Ignorance of the Rule Book is not an excuse to avoid a delay penalty.

## RULE 7: OFFENSE

### 1. General Offense

- 1) The most general rule of the game is to avoid contact that is judged to be significant or forceful.
- 2) Players cannot make contact that is considered unnecessary, intentional or provokes roughness.
- 3) Player's waist-worn flags must meet specifications, be legally worn and capturable.
- 4) 3- and 4-point stances are not permitted. The Snapper is the exception.
- 5) Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped. After all players have "set" one player may go "in motion".
- 6) There are no "free plays" for the offense.
- 7) After the official blows the ready-for-play whistle and the snapper puts their hand on the ball, no player may enter the neutral zone until the ball is moved to start the snap.
- 8) Snaps must be made between the center's legs and at least 1-yard in the backfield.
- 9) The player taking the snap (Passer) cannot run the ball through scrimmage unless the ball was first clearly released and touched by the defense (ex: tipped) or possessed by another offensive player.



- 10) The Passer must pass or hand the ball off before the play clock expires or the play is a “sack”. When the play clock expires and a sack declared, the ball will be returned to scrimmage and the down is consumed.
- 11) Teams will have four downs to achieve the line-to-gain or score unless awarded an automatic first down by penalty.
- 12) Any quick or abrupt movement by a single player or multiple offensive players in unison, which simulates the snap, is a false start.
- 13) It is a dead ball foul if any player on offense enters the neutral zone before the snap.
- 14) “Center Sneaks” are not allowed. The ball must completely leave the center’s hands. The center must take at least two steps backward to receive a hand off.
- 15) Direct snaps are legal to any player not on the line-of-scrimmage. The player receiving the snap **at least 1-yard in the backfield** is considered the Passer.
- 16) To be considered “not on the line of scrimmage” a player must clearly be 2-yards behind the line-of-scrimmage in the offensive backfield.
- 17) Ball carriers may use backward passes and legal pitches anywhere in the field of play.
- 18) The ball will be declared dead if any portion of the ball carrier’s body other than their hands or feet touches the ground.
- 19) A controlled ball-in-hand is considered an extension of the ball carrier’s body.
- 20) **Only a ball carrier’s hands or feet may touch the ground and the play remain live.** A controlled ball-in-hand is considered the ball carrier’s body and will allow the play to continue.
- 21) The offense is always responsible for retrieving the ball at the end of each play.
- 22) To prevent deceptive plays, offensive substitutes must come onto the field no less than 5 yards from their sideline sometime after the ball has been declared ready for play and before the snap.

## **2. Blocking**

- 1) Blocking is physically obstructing or contacting an opponent with any part of the body.
- 2) Physical-contact blocking (as seen in tackle football) is not allowed, even if unintentional.
- 3) “Pick plays” (often seen in basketball) or “rub routes” are not allowed as these plays are designed to initiate contact or to screen-out defenders. Receivers going down field after the snap may not initiate contact with an opponent.

## **3. Legal Screening**

- 1) Moving and stationary screening is allowed behind the line-of-scrimmage only.
- 2) To be a legal screen the screener must be behind the line-of-scrimmage and have their hands and arms either across their chest, behind their back or in a neutral state hanging at their sides.
- 3) If both the screener and their opponent move legally and contact occurs, it is incidental contact.
- 4) A player that does not move from their original spot after the snap is not guilty of an illegal screening. They have Right-of-Place (ROP). ROP exceeds Right-of-Way.

## **4. Illegal Screening**

- 1) Illegal screening is when an offensive player materially impedes the defender from getting to the ball carrier by abruptly stepping in the defender’s path or taking a position (two or less normal strides away) in a defender’s line of travel that forces the defender to abruptly veer around their opponent or makes material contact.
- 2) A screen blocker may not materially initiate contact, trip or attempt to trip an opponent.

- 3) A screen blocker may not extend or leverage an elbow, leg, knee, arms, chest, etc. to contain or impede an opponent.
- 4) Teammates of the ball carrier may not grasp or interlock hands or arms to extend a screen or interfere with the defender's ability to capture the ball carrier's flag.
- 5) Teammates of the ball carrier may not encircle the ball carrier to protect the ball carrier or interfere with the defender's ability to capture the ball carrier's flag.
- 6) A screen blocker may not take a position closer than a normal step behind a stationary opponent that limits the defender's movement.
- 7) Ball carriers cannot use their down field teammates as a screen by "juking around" or "hiding behind" them. This is legal behind the line-of-scrimmage.
- 8) A penalty may be called even when an offensive player accidentally obstructs a defender past the line-of-scrimmage.
- 9) Offensive players must be aware that they may be penalized for screening by simply chasing the play and providing an inadvertent block or screen.
- 10) Defenders may not use their hands, arms, etc. to displace a screen blocker (i.e., push out of the way, clear a path, shoot a tight gap in the offensive line). Defenders must work around a screen.

## 5. Fumbles / Muffs

- 1) The ball becomes dead when it touches the ground.
- 2) Forward fumbles eventually recovered by the ball carrier's team will be ruled dead. Team A may not recover and advance its own fumble. Forward fumbles may be ruled as Illegal Forward Pass.
- 3) If a passed, pitched, muffed (uncontrolled touch) or fumbled ball is intercepted by the opposing team before becoming dead it remains a "live ball".
- 4) Forward fumbles that hit the ground will be marked where the ball carrier's feet were when they lost control and not the spot where the ball hit the ground.
- 5) Backward fumbles are marked where they hit the ground. Backward passes that hit the ground are considered fumbles.
- 6) Muffed snaps will be marked where they hit the ground. If this is inside the end zone, safety.

## 6. Running / Jumping / Diving

- 1) Ball carriers may leave their feet, jump, and spin as evasive maneuvers to advance the ball if they do not put another player's safety at risk. An indicator of risk is leading with high knees. This is a judgment call by the game officials.
- 2) Not every insignificant jump or small hop constitutes a safety issue. This is a judgment call.
- 3) Jump cuts or advancing between two defenders is allowed if they do not initiate significant or impactful contact with the defender or put another player's safety at risk. This is a judgment call.
- 4) No player may hurdle over another player.
- 5) Ball carriers may not dive or fall forward in a perceived intentional manner to advance the ball or achieve a line-to-gain. This is a judgment call. Diving is defined as leaving the ground head-first.
- 6) Ball carriers may extend the ball out in front of them to gain additional yardage.
- 7) Diving by the defense to capture a ball carrier's flag is legal. However, game officials may still make judgment calls about significant or forceful contact while attempting to capture an opponent's flag.  
Teaching Point: Play the flag, not the player's body.
- 8) If a defender trips a ball carrier while pursuing the offensive player from the rear and the ball carrier goes to the ground (typically seen in break-away plays), even if the defender is making a fair and reasonable

attempt to capture the ball carrier's flag, the defender may be called for illegal contact and may be disqualified or ejected.

- 9) Defenders are obliged to make a fair, **SAFE** and reasonable flag pull attempts. Players cannot make contact that is judged as gratuitous, deliberate, or incites roughness. Safety is paramount.
- 10) Ball carriers must make every effort to avoid a defender who has established a stationary position.
- 11) Runners may leave their feet to avoid collision or falling on another player.
- 12) Passers may jump vertically to throw the ball over a defender.

## 7. Pass-Only / No-Run Zones

- 1) Pass-Only / No-Run Zones are enforced as a safety measure to discourage power-runs, diving, etc., near the goal line.
- 2) When spotted inside a Pass-Only / No-Run Zone the offense must execute a forward pass that breaks the line-of-scrimmage, even if the Passer is under duress / blitzed. (Illegal Forward Pass).
- 3) No running plays even if the ball carrier is under duress / blitzed.
- 4) Sacks by flag pull, play clock or a ball carrier giving themselves up nullify forward pass requirement.
- 5) Illegal advancement (i.e. Passer running the ball through scrimmage) will result in a dead ball and the down is consumed. No further administration.
- 6) When the ball is spotted in the Pass-Only / No-Run Zone and a legal forward pass is touched (tipped) by a defensive player the passer may recover the tipped ball but they may not advance the ball through scrimmage.

## 8. Flag Guarding / Stiff-Arming

- 1) The ball carrier's flags must be accessible to the defense throughout the play.
- 2) Flag guarding is the act of a ball carrier denying a defender the opportunity to capture their flag in any blocking or obstructive way.
- 3) Flags may not be tucked in pants, tucked under jerseys, worn improperly, looped around the waist belt, or knotted.
- 4) The ball carrier shall not flag guard by flailing of arms, using their hands, arms, elbows, or extremely dipped shoulders to deny the opportunity of an opponent to remove a flag.
- 5) The ball carrier may not swat a defender's hands away nor pin the flag against their body using the ball or hands.
- 6) Officials may call flag guarding if they judge that a ball carrier's running motion gave the ball carrier a decisive advantage over the defender and the running motion caused part of the ball carrier's body to block a de-flagging attempt.
- 7) Flag guarding shall not be called if there is no defensive player within reasonable distance to capture the flag.
- 8) The ball carrier may bend at the knees to dip-low, side cut, skip, or take short hops.
- 9) Extreme low dips (sometimes called a "duck-walk") are legal and do not constitute flag guarding in themselves if the flag carrier's flags are still exposed and the defensive player isn't physically impeded (i.e., the ball carrier isn't using their arms, hands, shoulder, ball, etc., to impede the defender). Normally flag guarding can be avoided while "duck-walking" when the ball carrier keeps their hands and elbows high on the body (example: at shoulder-level).
- 10) No penalty will be called if a ball carrier simultaneously flag guards as the defender pulls the flag.

- 11) Tampering with the flag in any way to gain advantage is illegal and will be dealt with under the Unfair Acts Rule.



Examples of flag guarding: stiff arming, pinning the flag, swatting, using the ball as a stiff arm, etc.

## 9. Pass Plays

- 1) Only one forward pass per play.
- 2) Once the ball has passed the line-of-scrimmage it cannot be returned to behind the line-of-scrimmage and thrown forward legally.
- 3) To be a legal pass both feet of the passer's body must be behind the neutral zone when the ball is released.
- 4) A passer may jump vertically to throw the ball over a defender.
- 5) All offensive players are eligible to receive a pass unless they have stepped out-of-bounds of their own accord. If they do it will be ruled an incomplete pass.
- 6) Offensive players may not re-establish themselves in the field of play or participate in anyway once they have stepped out-of-bounds on their own accord.
- 7) Any offensive player who receives either a forward or backward handoff behind scrimmage can pass the ball from behind the line-of-scrimmage.
- 8) If the passer's flag has been pulled while the passer still has the ball in their hand, it is a sack. There is no allowance given for the passer's arm being in motion at the time of the sack. Ball-in-hand at all equals a sack.
- 9) An underhand forward pass (shovel pass) is legal and if it is dropped, it is ruled an incomplete pass, not a fumble.

## 10. Batting

- 1) Batting is defined as intentionally striking the ball or intentionally changing its direction, without ever possessing the ball, with a hand or arm.
- 2) Any ball in flight may be batted in any direction by any eligible receiver.
- 3) A backward pass behind the line-of-scrimmage (including the Snap) cannot be batted forward by the passing team.

## 11. Intentional Grounding

- 1) For safety reasons the foul of Intentional Grounding has been eliminated.
- 2) A passer may throw the ball away anywhere behind the line-of-scrimmage to avoid a defender, unless the ball was spotted in a Pass-Only / No- Run Zone.
- 3) When spotted inside a Pass-Only / No-Run Zone the offense must execute a forward pass that breaks the line-of-scrimmage, even if the Passer is under duress / blitzed. This prohibition only applies in the Pass-Only / No-Run Zones. (Illegal Forward Pass).

- 4) It is legal for the passer to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball to the ground immediately (spiking) after receiving either a direct hand-to-hand snap, from the “pistol” or “shot-gun” formation, except in the Pass-Only / No-Run Zone. In the Pass-Only / No-Run Zone the pass must break the line-of-scrimmage.

## 12. Catches

- 1) A catch is defined as establishing possession of a flighted loose ball and legally contacting the ground inbound while maintaining control.
- 2) All passes are generally considered catchable. However, when a ball is inconceivably uncatchable, pass interference is generally not assessed, however, other fouls may apply.
- 3) If the ball comes out of the receiver’s grasp due to contact with the ground or while going to the ground the pass is incomplete.
- 4) If a legal forward pass is incomplete due to an egregious foul, officials may invoke the Last Player Rule (Rule 10.16)
- 5) Simultaneous catches between a defensive and offensive player become dead automatically and go to the offense.
- 6) In the event of a bobbled catch, i.e., the ball is batted about by the receiver to catch it, and the intended receiver is de-flagged before taking full possession, there is no penalty for early flag pull.
- 7) Whether or not a ball is tipped or touched in the air has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls anywhere on the field (roughing, personal fouls, illegal contact, etc.).

## 13. Punting

- 1) On fourth down a team Coach / Speaking Captain must promptly inform a covering official whether they choose to “Play” (*go for it*) or Punt (*declare punt*).
- 2) Offensive Teams MUST declare their intent (“Play or Punt”) when asked by the referee and prior to the ‘Ready for Play’ whistle.
- 3) Once the whistle is blown teams must “Play” or use a legal time-out to change their option.
- 4) Making a “Punt” or “Play” decision cannot be used as a stall tactic to consume time. Answer quickly or game officials are compelled to interpret the delay as a “Play” decision.
- 5) If they “Play” and fail to achieve the line-to-gain the opposing team takes the ball from the succeeding spot.
- 6) The succeeding spot is the point at which the ball will next be put into play by rule.
- 7) If they choose to “Punt”, a game official will move the ball to the opponent’s 5-yard line, change of possession.

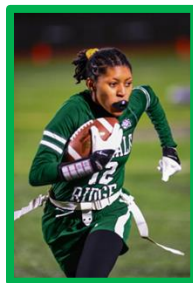


Photo Courtesy of Jim Wilkerson, Tahoma Photography, @jmw tahomaphoto

## RULE 8: DEFENSE

### 1. General Defense

- 1) Players cannot make contact that is judged as gratuitous, deliberate, or incites roughness.
- 2) Defenders must play the ball carrier's flags, not the player's body.
- 3) Roughness includes attempting to punch the ball out of the hands of potential receivers.
- 4) Defenders must make all reasonable efforts to minimize contact while capturing an opponent's flag.
- 5) Defensive players may not use 3- or 4-point stances.
- 6) Pushing out on the sidelines of a grounded player is not permitted unless the defense was making a fair, legal, and **SAFE** attempt to pull the ball carrier's flags, i.e., the defender's hands were aimed low at the ball carrier's hips and flags and not high up on the body.
- 7) Pushing out an airborne player is not permitted.
- 8) Purposeful shoving out of bounds is not permitted. "Locking out" at the elbow or "following thorough" with hands while downing a ball carrier indicates excessive roughness.
- 9) Defensive teams may not attempt to confuse the offensive team by simulating their pre-snap signals or cadence.
- 10) Defenders may not line up directly over the snapper, they must provide at least a 1-yard buffer.

### 2. Blitzing the Passer

- 1) Before each play can begin an official will mark off a 7-yard blitz line.
- 2) Defensive players that "blitz the passer" must begin the play at this 7-yard mark or further away from the line-of-scrimmage.
- 3) Up to two defensive players may establish right-of-way (ROW) by giving a clear and obvious legal hand signage at least two seconds imminently before the snap.
- 4) Defensive player signally ROW are not compelled to blitz. They may fall back in coverage.
- 5) Players with ROW may not be materially impeded on their path to the line-of-scrimmage in the direction of the Passer's initial position. Afterward they may be legally screened in the backfield (Shielding or Inpeding).
- 6) Any defender that is at least 7-yards away from scrimmage at the snap may enter the backfield once the ball is snapped but do not automatically have ROW if they have not given a legal signal.
- 7) If a player signally ROW doesn't line up at or beyond the 7-yard blitz line or breaks the 7-yard blitz line pre-snap, this is a defensive false start.
- 8) Players not rushing the passer may defend the line-of-scrimmage but not enter the backfield unless the ball is handed-off, passed, pitched or clearly touches another player. **Teaching Point:** Run-Pass-Options or faking an RPO invites defenders to legally cross the line-of-scrimmage.
- 9) If the ball makes contact (touches) with any player other than the player who took the snap, the defense is eligible to cross the line-of-scrimmage. They may elect to or not.
- 10) If the ball makes contact (touches) with any player other than the player who took the snap and the defense does not cross the line-of-scrimmage and pursue the ball carrier, the player that took the snap is not permitted to run the ball past scrimmage. Simply touching the ball to another player does not permit the passer to run.

### 3. Roughing the Passer

- 1) Defensive players must make a concerted effort to avoid charging into the passer.
- 2) During the passer's drop and throughout their entire throwing motion, the passer cannot be touched above the upper waist in any material way. Material is defined as consequential, meaningful, significant, or substantial. This is a judgement call.
- 3) Defenders cannot materially touch any part of the passer's arm, hand, shoulder, or ball while the ball is still in the passer's hand. The ball is considered an extension of the passer's arm and hand.
- 4) To assist defensive players to avoid unnecessary contact with the passer the covering official will endeavor, but is not required, to announce "balls away" or some other helpful phrase when the ball has left the passer's hand.
- 5) Defensive players may not "crash" the passer's throwing arm, shoulder, or body even if the ball is touched first.
- 6) An insignificant "brush-by" may be allowed by the game official but is not guaranteed. This is a judgment call.
- 7) Contacting the passer while blocking or attempting to block a pass may result in a roughing the passer penalty.
- 8) Whether or not a ball is tipped in the air has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls (roughing, personal fouls, etc.).
- 9) A roughing penalty will not be enforced if a passer initiates contact with an opponent while in the throwing motion; for example, during the passer's follow through the passer's arm contacts an opponent's hand, arm, or shoulder. In this instance the impetus of the contact is the action of the passer and not the defender. This is a judgment call.
- 10) It is a personal foul if the passer's follow-through hand or arm makes significant contact with an opponent's head, neck or face (Personal Foul, Contact above the Shoulders). This is a judgment call.
- 11) If roughness is habitual or excessive for a single player, disqualification or ejection procedures may apply.
- 12) If roughness is habitual or excessive for a team, forfeiture procedures may apply.

### 4. Flag Pulling Mechanics

- 1) Flag pulling is the legal removal of a flag from an opponent who has possession of the ball.
- 2) Legal flag pulls must begin with the hands leading toward the opponent's hips and flags.
- 3) Defenders must play the ball carrier's flags, not the player's body.
- 4) No player has the right to over aggressively "body up", "wrap up", "play through", "bull rush", charge, spear or lead with a shoulder, tackle, or attempt to tackle an opponent even to capture a flag.
- 5) Pushing out on the sidelines is not permitted unless the defense was making a fair, legal, and **SAFE** attempt to pull the ball carrier's flags, i.e., the defender's hands were aimed low at the ball carrier's hips and flags and not high up on the body.
- 6) Pushing an airborne player out of bounds is not permitted.
- 7) A defensive player may not pull the flag of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- 8) The defensive player who removes the flag from an offensive ball carrier is encouraged to show good sportsmanship and hold the flag above their head to assist the officials in locating the spot where the capture occurred.
- 9) Players may be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct for throwing, spiking, obscuring, or delaying the ball carrier in recovering their pulled flag.

- 10) If a receiver has an incomplete or missing flag belt when they catch the ball, they will be down upon possession.
- 11) When a ball carrier flag guards and a defensive player pulls the ball carrier's flag simultaneously, no penalty will be called for flag guarding.
- 12) To garner an "early flag pull" penalty there must be a meaningful measurement of time (the intended ball carrier takes at least two steps) between the pull and the ball carrier taking full control (bobbling) of the ball. Flag pulls that happen simultaneously or near simultaneously to the ball carrier taking full possession will not be considered early flag pulls. Officials are encouraged to assist the flow of the game by announcing "play on" and giving the "clock is running signal".
- 13) The benefit of the doubt will go to the defense for simultaneous or near simultaneous flag pulls as the intended receiver is bobbling the ball or attempting to catch it.

## 5. Pass Coverage / Interference

- 1) Pass interference is defined as physical contact between players on a legal forward pass up to the point the pass is touched or becomes incomplete.
- 2) All passes are generally considered catchable. However, when a ball is inconceivably uncatchable, pass interference may not be assessed, however other fouls may apply.
- 3) This is a "free release" league.
- 4) Defenders cannot "chuck", "jam", "bump", "press", etc., a receiver.
- 5) Receivers may not intentionally contact defenders as they progress down field.
- 6) A player may "find" their opponent by reaching out and placing a hand on them if touching does not delay or impede them. This is not considered pass interference.
- 7) Pass interference normally occurs above the waist; entangled feet are not considered pass interference.
- 8) Incidental contact is not considered pass interference.
- 9) Contact away from the direction of the pass is not considered pass interference but may be a separate foul.
- 10) Pass interference indicators are:
  - a. Shoving or pushing off to create separation.
  - b. Making significant or impactful contact before the ball arrives.
  - c. Playing through the back of an opponent.
  - d. Hook and turn (grabbing the torso and turning an opponent before the pass arrives).
  - e. Early material contact by a defender who is not playing or looking for the ball.
  - f. Arm bars, restricting, or grabbing.
  - g. Blocking downfield before the ball has been touched, commonly seen through "pick plays".
  - h. Cutting off the path of a receiver by being in front of them and slowing down or being beside them and "riding" them off their path to the ball.
- 11) A player may use their arms or hands to obstruct the receiver's view of the ball (face guarding) without turning their own head to play the ball if contact is not made with the receiver.

## 6. Interceptions

- 1) Intercepted passes remain live and may be returned for points.
- 2) Returned scrimmage interceptions are worth 6-points regardless of where the ball became live (Pick 6)
- 3) Intercepted passes during Point After Touchdown (PAT) attempts may be returned for 2 points regardless of the PAT attempt.



- 4) In the event of an interception, the intercepting team must secure the ball with “clean hands” to be legal i.e., they must not have committed a foul before or simultaneous to the interception.
- 5) If the intercepting team gained the interception with “clean hands” they will be awarded a first down where the ball becomes dead (flag pull, stepping out-of-bounds, fumbled, etc.)
- 6) Fouls by the intercepting team after an interception will be assessed either from the spot of the foul or the end of the run (whichever hurts the intercepting team worse).
- 7) In the event of fouls by the intercepting team and their opponent after a clean hands interception, the intercepting team will decline their opponent’s foul and accept the result of their penalty to keep the ball. This is not a case of off-setting penalties.
- 8) Interceptions during overtime periods are dead ball and may not be returned for points.

## **RULE 9: OVERTIME**

### **1. General Overtime Rules**

- 1) If regulation time ends in a tie, each team will have **ONE** three-consecutive play PAT try series.
- 2) Each team will have three consecutive plays. Teams will not alternate turns.
- 3) During playoffs and championship games unlimited three-play overtime try series will be used until a winner is produced.
- 4) Each offense will have the choice to go for a 1-, 2- or 3- point PAT:
  - o 1 point from the 5-yard line, pass play only
  - o 2 points from the 10-yard line, run or pass
  - o 3 points from the 17-yard line, run or pass
- 5) Offense must declare their choice on each try and may change choices with each try attempt.
- 6) A coin toss will determine first possession.
- 7) The away team will call the toss to begin overtime.
- 8) The winner of the coin toss will choose to begin on offense or defense.
- 9) The lead official will choose which common end zone will be used.
- 10) Interceptions during overtime scoring attempts are dead balls and no points will be awarded.
- 11) If play ends in a tie after the overtime series, a tie will be declared. Exceptions: Playoffs, Championships.
- 12) There will not be additional coin tosses for additional overtime play is required.
- 13) Teams have one time out per overtime period.

### **2. Penalty Enforcement During Overtime**

	<b>Successful Attempt</b>	<b>Unsuccessful Attempt</b>	<b>Penalties That Carry Loss-of-Down</b>	<b>Unsportsmanlike And Personal Fouls</b>
<b>Foul by the Offense</b>	Yardage assessed, Retry the attempt	Attempt no good, no retry	Attempt no good, no retry	Carries over to the next possession
<b>Foul by the Defense</b>	Declined, attempt is good	Yardage assessed, Retry the attempt	Not applicable	Carries over to the next possession

- 1) Penalties and play are administered as it is during regulation time.
- 2) Point conversion choices cannot be changed after a penalty.

- 3) Penalties that occur during overtime periods will carryover and be enforced from the next spot or possession unless declined. All 10-yard penalties will carry over.
- 4) Personal and unsportsmanlike fouls by the defense on a successful attempt are enforced on the next possession or next spot in overtime periods.
- 5) Fouls committed by the offense on a successful attempt will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.
- 6) Fouls committed by the offense on an unsuccessful attempt will be declined by rule (exception: personal and unsportsmanlike fouls).
- 7) Fouls by the offense during an attempt that carries a loss-of-down penalty (flag guarding, illegal advancement, illegal pass, etc.) will result in the attempt being “no good” and the attempt will not be repeated.
- 8) Fouls by the defense during an unsuccessful attempt will result in a retry after the options are administered. The offense may opt to accept or decline penalty yardage before the retry.

## **RULE 10: OFFICIATING**

### **1. Definitions:**

#### **1. Right-Of-Place (ROP):**

- 1) ROP allows teams to play a controlled game, avoiding preventable or deliberate contact.
- 2) Right-Of-Place protection is granted to any offensive player that doesn't make movement from their initial spot after the snap (i.e., they are standing still).
- 3) When an offensive player has ROP, the defense must avoid contact.
- 4) ROP supersedes Right-Of-Way (ROW).

#### **2. Right-Of-Way (ROW):**

- 1) ROW allows teams to play a controlled game, avoiding preventable or deliberate contact.
- 2) To maintain ROW the defensive player must move swiftly, consistently and not change direction.
- 3) This may not be exploited to provoke contact, **aiming or denying legal use of the field of play.**
- 4) Avoiding interference / contact with an opponent is required **even if unintentional.**
- 5) Intentionally contacting an opponent, even with ROW or ROP, will be penalized.
- 6) A player with ROW has a higher freedom when determining who is guilty of a foul than all other players except those with ROP.
- 7) **A ball carrier has no ROW and must avoid significant or impactful contact.**

#### **3. Blitzzer:**

- 1) The blitzzer is a defensive player who crosses the line-of-scrimmage while the ball is live and before the Passer has released the ball.
- 2) **A blitzzer must have all body parts more than 7-yards away from the scrimmage line prior to the snap. Blitzzers are highly encouraged to check-in with the covering official to ensure they are legally lined up.**
- 3) **A blitzzer can establish themselves with a legal signal by raising one hand clearly above their head for at least two seconds with the snap imminent.**
- 4) **A maximum of two players may legally claim ROW.**
- 5) **Blitzzers may not squeeze through gaps between defenders and create contact.**

- 6) Illegal Signal fouls are dead ball fouls, shall be blown dead and treated like a defensive encroachment / offside penalty.
- 7) Players that claim ROW and are less than 7-yards from scrimmage have committed the foul of Illegal Signal (Illegal Procedure).
- 8) When more than three players signal ROW the team has committed the foul of Illegal Signal.
- 9) The blitz must be immediately after the snap, quick and straight to the point where the Passer received the snap to keep the ROW.
- 10) If a blitz is giving an invalid signal, rushing slow, aiming at another spot or changing the direction during the rush, they lose the ROW.
- 11) If a Blitz has a legal signal but breaks the 7-yard blitz line prior to the snap (imagine, hard count) they may not legally blitz. There is no penalty if they do not cross scrimmage before the ball leaves the passer's hand. Once the ball leaves the passer's hand then they may legally enter the offensive backfield. They may also reset behind the 7-yard blitz line and re-establish a legal signal prior to the snap.

#### 4. Holding:

- 1) Holding is illegally preventing or significantly increasing the difficulty of a runner from advancing. Restricting a player who is not in possession of the ball is also holding.
- 2) This includes a defender using / leveraging their grip anywhere on the ball carrier's equipment, uniform or body in an attempt to capture the flag.
- 3) Indicators of holding are:
  - a) the act was significant
  - b) the act was restrictive
  - c) the act prevented the player from participating in the play
  - d) the act forced the player off their intended path.
- 4) A quick grab-and-release that does not fulfill the indicators above should not be treated as a hold.
- 5) When a hold occurs game officials may administer the penalty as a Minor Hold (5 yards) or a Major Hold (10 yards) depending on the severity of the act in the covering official's judgement.

#### 5. Momentum

If the ball is intercepted between the 5-yard line and the goal line and the player's momentum takes them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead while in their possession or the intercepting team fouls in the end zone (example: flag guarding) the ball belongs to the intercepting team and the penalty will be assessed from the spot where it was intercepted. It is not a touchback. It is not a Safety.

#### 6. Marking / Spotting the Ball

- 1) When the ball becomes dead it will be re-spotted near the center of the field. A formal hash mark system is not used. Centers may spot the ball anywhere along the line-of-scrimmage within 5-yards of the center of the field as determined by the covering official.
- 2) The ball will be spotted wherever the ball was at the time of the flag pull or wherever the ball carrier left the field-of-play.
- 3) A ball spotter/ball marker or line judge shall be used to mark the line-of-scrimmage. The marker will be placed on the sideline adjacent to the line-of-scrimmage.
- 4) If a ball carrier's flag inadvertently comes apart or falls off during the play, the ball carrier will be ruled down.

- 5) If the ball is intercepted in the end zone and the intercepting team fouls in the end zone before the ball is brought back into the field (example: flag guarding), the result of the play will be a touchback and the foul will be administered from the touchback spot. This will not result in Safety.
- 6) When a three-person officiating crew is used, the team Center will spot by aligning with the Line Judge. If a four-person or more crew is used, an Official will spot the ball.

## 7. Forfeits and Ending the Game

- 1) The game may not end with a penalty that is accepted. All offensive loss-of-down penalties that occur with time expired in either half will end the game or half.
- 2) Forfeits that occur before the contest are recorded as 30-0. Forfeits that occur once the contest is underway will be recorded as that score or the actual score when the forfeit occurred, whichever is greater.
- 3) If a team plays in a habitual or excessively rough manner the game may be forfeited.
- 4) No period or half can end if there is an obvious timing error, or any other irregularity has occurred.
- 5) A team, coach, player, players or non-players that refuses to comply with a game official's reasonable direction or request in an expeditious manner are guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct and making a travesty of the game. The game may be suspended, ended, forfeited or otherwise administered by the local governing authorities.

## 8. Cool Down Period

- 1) Before, or instead of, disqualification or ejection an official may order, but is not required to, a player a "cool down" period if the official chooses.
- 2) All unsportsmanlike conduct and egregious personal fouls will be accompanied by a cool down period at a minimum.
- 3) Players should think of this "cool down" as a warning before being disqualified or ejected and be thankful for it.
- 4) This period will consist of five plays and will be tracked by the official who ordered it.
- 5) The player must be off the field for five plays regardless. A score, time out, end of the half, change of possession or another event does not release the player back to the field. They must stay off the field for five plays.

## 9. Disqualifications and Ejections

- 1) Disqualifications, Ejections, Cool Downs, and Unsportsmanlike Conduct are the only four penalties that cannot be declined. They are completely the option of the game officials.
- 2) Invoking a disqualification and ejection is completely the determination of the presiding official and may not be appealed.
- 3) Disqualifications are normally reserved to address lower-level transgressions.
- 4) A disqualification will last for the remainder of the game the player was disqualified for.
- 5) A disqualified player may play in the next scheduled game.
- 6) An ejected player may not play in the next scheduled game. They must sit out at least one additional game.
- 7) Any official may disqualify a player.

- 8) To eject a player or non-player all covering officials must agree, and it must be reported to league management as soon as feasible.
- 9) If roughness is habitual or excessive disqualification or ejection procedures may apply.
- 10) Ejections and disqualifications may occur for but are not limited to:
  - a. A second unsportsmanlike or personal foul on a single player
  - b. Any act deemed egregious by the head official
  - c. Disrespectfully addressing or intentionally touching a game official
  - d. Four unsportsmanlike and /or egregious personal fouls by one team (forfeiture)
  - e. Fighting

## 10. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- 1) All unsportsmanlike conduct and *egregious* personal fouls will be accompanied by a five-play “cool down” period at a minimum.
- 2) Disrespect toward an official, spectator or another player will constitute unsportsmanlike conduct.
- 3) Players shall not show disrespect, taunt, spike the ball or flag belt, or be excessive in any way, to include using force against, verbally attack or otherwise harassing another player or non-player.
- 4) Players and non-players may not or needlessly engage with game officials to complain, question calls or no-calls. harass, hassle, pester, badger, bait or otherwise delay, hamper, or impede the flow of the game.
- 5) Celebrations are fine but keep them short and not directed at an opponent.
- 6) Use of inflammatory words or gestures is prohibited.
- 7) Any excessive, prolonged or choreographed action by a team or player to draw attention.
- 8) If unsportsmanlike conduct occurs during a live play and the team did not score on that play, the penalty will be assessed from the new line-of-scrimmage, i.e., it will be added to or subtracted from the end of the play.
- 9) Officials reserve the right to end the game if teams are not acting in a sportsmanship-like manner (trash-talking, rough play, running up the score as punishment, etc.)
- 10) Any deception play (ex: late replacement, illegal substitution, simulated replacement, “hideout” plays, words or action designed to deceive an opponent or to make them believe that the snap is not imminent are not in the spirit of fair play and are considered unsportsmanlike. The play will be shut down and the penalty will be assessed to the Coach. Please play in the spirit of fair play.
- 11) Deception plays may be elevated to Unfair Acts.

## 11. Contact in a Minimal-Contact League / Rough Play

- 1) Players cannot make contact that is judged as gratuitous, deliberate, or incites roughness.
- 2) Players must maintain positive control of their bodies and exceptional awareness of the the space around them to avoid significant or impactful contact.
- 3) While this is a minimal-contact league, contact does occur on occasion. Most contact is unintentional and insignificant. Players and spectators must understand that contact is impossible to avoid and is usually a result of bodies moving in space simultaneously and the nature of the sport. It is the job of each player and official to keep contact to a minimum through self-control, training, and enforcement.
- 4) On any given collision or contact, an official has seven options to use at their discretion:
  - Make “no call” if they think the contact was accidental and incidental
  - Issue cautions/warnings to the team Coach instead of assessing penalties
  - Send the player off the field for a “cool down” period
  - Call Illegal Contact on the Defense if they feel the defender is the aggressor
  - Call Illegal Contact on the Offense if they feel the offensive player is the aggressor
  - Call Off-Setting Penalties if they feel both players were equally the aggressors

- Disqualify or eject a player if they feel the contact was intentional or egregious

Teaching Lesson: Normally the player that “drops the shoulder first” is deemed the aggressor

- 5) If roughness is habitual or excessive for a single player, disqualification or ejection procedures may apply.
- 6) If roughness is habitual or excessive for a team, forfeiture procedures may apply.

## 12. Fighting

- 1) Fighting will lead to immediate ejection, possible suspension, or lifetime exclusion.
- 2) Fighting is any act or attempt to act by a player or non-player to strike or engage a player or non-player in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to, attempting to strike or striking with the arms, hands, legs, feet, or foreign object or substance whether there was contact or not.
- 3) Fighting between players on the same team and will be treated the same as between opponents.
- 4) Any player who comes off the sideline to participate in a fight will be disqualified or ejected.
- 5) If either team or team members leaves the team box area to participate in a fight, the game will be ended immediately.

## 13. Bench Fouls or Warnings

Teams may incur bench fouls for a variety of reasons to include but not limited to:

- 1) Players or non-players interfering with play or an official
- 2) Disrespect toward officials or other players or non-players
- 3) Players or non-players in the designated restricted area during a live play
- 4) Non-players on the field of play
- 5) Teams not remaining in the designated team box

## 14. Inadvertent Whistle

- 1) If an official blows an inadvertent whistle, they will declare the ball dead where the ball was at the time of the inadvertent whistle. The team against which the action offended may have the option of accepting the play (i.e., the yards gained and the down advances) or replaying the down from the original line-of-scrimmage.
- 2) If the ball was in the air when the inadvertent whistle occurred, it will be returned to the line-of-scrimmage and the down will be replayed.
- 3) If a penalty marker is thrown before an inadvertent whistle, an accepted penalty will be administered as in any other play situation. When the foul is accepted, the inadvertent whistle is disregarded.
- 4) When an inadvertent whistle is triggered by an unfair act or an act used to deceive or confuse a game official, the officiating crew may use their collective judgment to fairly adjudicate the situation. It may result in yardage awarded, a score granted, and/or the guilty player disqualified, etc. It is solely up to the officiating crew to decide.

## 15. Unfair Acts Rule

- 1) Neither team shall commit an act which, in the judgment of the game officials, tends to make a travesty of the game.
- 2) The head official or senior staff members may enforce any penalty or remedy any situation with anything they consider equitable -- including awarding of a first down, a line-to-gain, a replay, a score, forfeiture, removal of forfeiture or any administrative issue or situation to include adjustment of the clock or anything not covered in these rules.

- 3) Plays or actions (outside game norms) designed to trick or deceive are considered unfair. Players must make themselves known to their opponent. Hideout, ruse, or distraction plays, actions or formations are not legal.

## 16. Last Player Rule and Penalty

- 1) If the last defensive player physically contains the ball carrier (e.g., bear hugs, flagrantly holds, illegally pushes the ball carrier out-of-bounds, tackles, attempts to tackle, etc.) or commits egregious illegal contact, the offensive team will be awarded at least one line-to-gain distance from the spot of foul and an automatic first down. This line-to-gain may include the goal line.
- 2) In the spirit of the Unfair Acts Rule, officials have the discretion to award a score if a flagrant / egregious foul occurred inside the final line-to-gain if they reasonably judge a foul is the only thing that prevented the ball carrier from scoring.

## 17. Illegal Formations

- 1) Teams may not have more than four players in the backfield at the snap (i.e. they must have three on the line of scrimmage).
- 2) Defenders may not line up directly over the snapper, they must provide at least a 1-yard buffer.
- 3) Players must make themselves known to their opponent. Ruse, deception, distraction plays or formations are not legal.

## 18. Illegal Participation

- 1) When a player or non-player illegally participates in live play the penalty will be assessed from one of four spots at the choice of the offended Coach.
  - a) Spot of the foul
  - b) End of the run
  - c) Spot where the illegal participant entered the field of play
  - d) Previous spot
- 2) If a “clean-hands” change of possession occurred prior to the foul, the change-of-possession will not be questioned. However the foul will still be adjudicated.
- 3) If the change of possession occurred after the foul occurred the ball will be returned the previous spot and the penalty will be assessed.

*\* This can be a very complicated situation to adjudicate. Game officials are encouraged to stop the game clock and confer to ensure the correct outcome is obtained.*

## 19. Pace of Play

- 1) Officials will hustle but not hurry. They must control the game and not let an anxious team set the pace. Please keep a consistent and brisk pace throughout the game to ensure teams get the maximum amount of playing time possible.
- 2) If a snap occurs before the officials are ready, ready-to-play whistle or announcement, the ball will be blown dead, and the quarterback may be issued a warning for the first offense.
  - 3) Officials may stop the clock as they see fit to administer a fair, controlled contest.
- 4) Offensive teams may not take advantage of defensive substitutions to run “quick snap” plays to catch defensive teams not ready.

## 20. 5v5 Alterations

- 1) This format may be altered to support a five-versus-five contests.
- 2) The following changes shall be made to play 5v5:
  - a) The field is narrowed to 25-yards wide
  - b) The only line-to-gain will be at mid-field, not the two lines-to-gain system used in 7v7
  - c) No legal screening anywhere on the field, including the back field
  - d) There is no “granted” 1-point PAT option. Teams must execute a play to attempt any PAT value.
  - e) To exercise the three-point PAT option the ball will be spotted at mid-field.

## 21. Thunder and Lightning Protocol / Uncontrollable Events

- 1) Practice and competitions will be suspended immediately when lightning is detected within 10 miles.
- 2) All players and spectators should seek safe shelter during severe weather (but not under trees).
- 3) Play shall not resume for at least 30 minutes after the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder.
- 4) Prior to leaving the field the head official shall note the team in possession, the position and direction of travel of the ball, the line to gain, the time on the clock and any other administrative notes needed to resume the game when play is allowed.

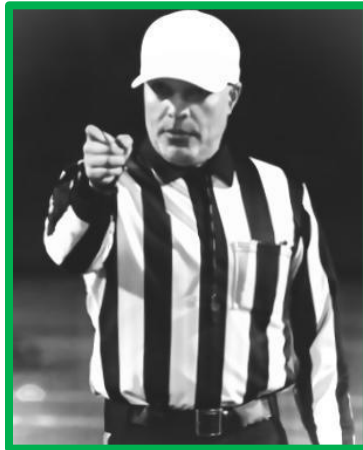









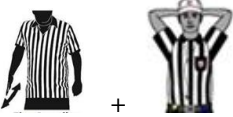



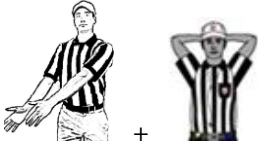





Photo Courtesy of Jim Wilkerson, Tahoma Photography, @jmw tahomaphoto



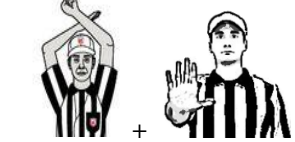







## FLAG PENALTY CHART






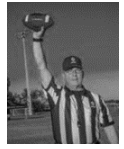







- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal when yardage is more than half the distance.
- All penalties may be declined except cool downs, unsportsmanlike, disqualifications, or ejections.
- The yardage portion of any penalty may be declined.
- Most fouls carry a 5-yard penalty except those that are **bad contact** or **bad conduct**.
- The administration spot of a penalty is determined by the action during the down (spot, previous, basic).
- Administer the penalty or violation from the line-of-scrimmage if the foul occurred during a dead period or live loose ball period (pass play). The exception to this rule is Roughing, see below.
- Administer the penalty for offensive plays (when the ball is in possession of a ball carrier) from the spot of the foul or the end of the run whichever penalizes the offending team the most (flag guard, screening, blocking, participation, holding, illegal advancement, illegal pass, stripping, charging, personal fouls etc.) Live-ball Unsportsmanlike Conduct fouls are treated as dead-ball fouls.
- Fouls simultaneous-to-the-snap will not stop the action (*Illegal Motion, Shift, Formation or Procedure, etc.*).

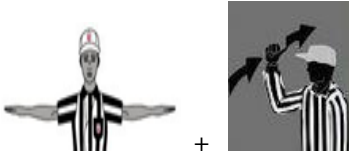







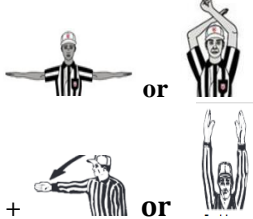
5-Yard Dead Ball Penalties	Yards	Signal
Delay of Game / Disconcerting Acts / Illegal Time Out (whistle action dead)	5	
False Start / Snap Infraction / Illegal Procedure / <u>Illegal Defensive Signaling</u> (whistle action dead)	5	
Illegal Screen <u>Behind</u> the Line of Scrimmage:	5	
Offside / Encroachment (whistle action dead)	5	
Illegal Motion / Shift	5	 <small>Illegal shift - 2 hands Illegal motion - 1 hand</small>
Illegal Substitution with snap imminent (whistle action dead)	5	
Failure to Wear Proper Equipment (example: mouth guard)	Warning, 5, 10 at Referee discretion	












5-Yard Loss of Down Penalties	Yards	Signal
Flag Guarding	5	
Flag Guarding / Stiff Arm, Swiping, Pinning of Flag, etc.	5	
Illegal Forward Pass / Handling	5	
Illegal Screen <b>Beyond</b> the Line of Scrimmage:	5	
Illegal Hand Off: (Handing the Ball Forward Beyond the Line-of-Scrimmage)	5	
5-Yard Penalties	Yards	Signal
Offense / Defense False Start:  Defense False Start (ROW Blitzer not lined up legally or leaves the blitz line pre-snap)	5	
Shielding ( <i>aka Impeding the Blitzer</i> )  Forcing a Blitzer with ROW to deviate or slow their Blitz without contact, Elevate shielding with contact to Illegal Contact.	5	
Stripping or Attempted Strip <i>- The ball is considered an extension of the passer's arm and hand. Stripping or attempting to strip the passer will be elevated to Roughing the Passer)</i>	5	
Illegal Substitution (too many players on the field during a live play or a live play is imminent, no participation in live play)	5	
Holding (i.e. no immediate release) <i>Indicators:</i> <i>- was it significant?</i> <i>- was it restrictive?</i> <i>- did it prevent the player from participating?</i> <i>- did it move the player off their path?</i>	Minor Hold: 5 Major Hold: 10 <i>(Official's Judgement)</i>	



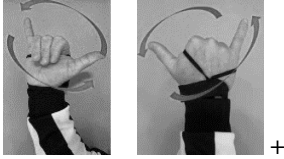
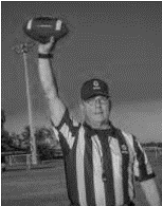


<p>Personal Foul: Illegal Contact  <i>- Possibly an egregious personal foul, automatic cool down, possible disqualification or ejection</i></p>	<p>Offense: 10 + Loss of Down</p> <p>Defense: 10 + Auto First Down</p>	
<p>Personal Foul: Blocking (physical contact, tap fists together with an aggressive outward motion)</p>	<p>10 + Loss of Down</p>	
<p>Personal Foul: Charging / Bull Blitz  <i>- Possibly an egregious personal foul, automatic cool down, possible disqualification or ejection</i></p>	<p>Offense: 10 + Loss of Down</p> <p>Defense: 10 + Auto First Down</p>	
<p>Personal Foul: Illegal Body Check / Leading with Shoulder.  <i>- Possibly an egregious personal foul, automatic cool down, possible disqualification or ejection</i></p>	<p>Offense: 10 + Loss of Down</p> <p>Defense: 10 + Auto First Down</p>	
<p>Personal Foul: Roughing the Passer (Defense)  <i>- Possibly an egregious personal foul, automatic cool down, possible disqualification or ejection</i>  <i>- May be administered from the previous line-of-scrimmage or added to the end of the run, offended Coach's choice.</i></p>	<p>10 + Auto First Down</p>	
<p>Personal Foul: Tackling  <i>- Possibly an egregious personal foul, automatic cool down, possible disqualification or ejection</i>  <i>- This may be adjudicated under the Last Player Rule or Unfair Acts Rule and adjudicated in the senior official's judgment</i></p>	<p>Offense: 10 + Loss of Down</p> <p>Defense: 10 + Auto First Down</p>	
<p>Illegal Participation (too many players AND involved in a live play)  <i>- Administered from previous spot, spot of participation or spot where offender entered the field during a live play, whichever hurts more</i></p>	<p>10</p>	
<p>Unsportsmanlike Conduct  <i>- Automatic cool down, possible disqualification or ejection</i></p>	<p>Offense: 10 + Loss of Down</p> <p>Defense: 10 + Auto First Down</p>	

Disqualification / Ejection	Yards	Signal
Egregious Act <i>- Automatic cool down, possible disqualification or ejection</i>	Offense: 10 + Loss of Down  Defense: 10 + Auto First Down	 + 
Fighting / Attempting to Fight / Aggressive Language or Acts <i>- Automatic cool down, possible disqualification or ejection</i>	Offense: 10 + Loss of Down  Defense: 10 + Auto First Down	 + 
Fourth Unsportsmanlike and / or Egregious Personal Fouls or Acts by same team	Forfeiture	 + 
Habitual or Excessive Roughness	Offense: 10 + Loss of Down  Defense: 10 + Auto First Down	 + 
Intentionally Touching or Disrespectfully Addressing Game Official	Offense: 10 + Loss of Down  Defense: 10 + Auto First Down	 + 
Players and non-players may not or needlessly engage with game officials to complain, question calls or no-calls. harass, hassle, pester, badger, bait or otherwise delay, hamper, or impede the flow of the game.	Offense: 10 + Loss of Down  Defense: 10 + Auto First Down	  Charged to the Bench (four unsportsmanlike and /or egregious personal fouls by one team (forfeiture))
Second Egregious Personal Foul by Same Player	Offense: 10 + Loss of Down  Defense: 10 + Auto First Down	 + 

Second Unsportsmanlike by Same Player / Non-player	Offense: 10 + Loss of Down  Defense: 10 + Auto First Down	
<b>Special Enforcement / Violations</b>		
	Yards	Signal
Flagrant Untucked or Unknotted Shirt or anything else impacting capturing of the ball carrier's flag (down consumed)	0	
Improper Distribution of Flags (Bunched, turned, etc.)  Pull down on an imaginary rope in front of you and ring an imaginary church bell (similar to "same spot" signal but more exaggerated) (down consumed)	0	
Illegal Advancement: Passer Running through Scrimmage, Diving, etc. (down consumed)	0	
Deception Plays / Unfair Acts (Whistle Action Dead) (down consumed)	Referee's Discretion	
Sideline / Bench Warning	Warning	
Sideline / Bench Foul	5, 10  10 for all subsequent	
Illegal Touching	Loss of Down  (i.e. down is consumed)	
Last Player Rule (Defense)	Awarded at least one line-to-gain (may include award of a score)	
Unfair Acts	Referee's Discretion	<i>Signal as situation requires</i>

Cool Down (must be enforced on all unsportsmanlike conduct fouls and egregious person fouls at a minimum).	5 plays minimum	
Mercy	When the point differential is 30 points or greater	
<b>SUPPLEMENTAL SIGNALS</b>		
Correct Number of Players on the Field		
Same Spot (Official Taps Fists)		
Double Stakes (the line to gain is further than the next marker)		
Start the Clock or Clock is Running		
Ready to Play / Untimed Down		
Stop the Clock / Time Out		
Touchdown / Successful PAT		
Safety		
Dead Ball		

Disregard Flag		
Tipped Ball		
Turn Over on Downs / Flip the Field		
End of Half or End of Ball Game (with or without ball)		

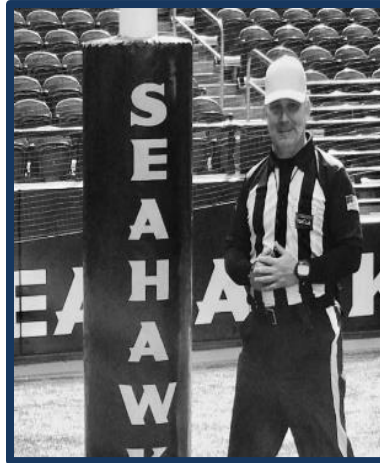


**Special Acknowledgement:**

Warmest regards to Chris Amundson, Mike Daye, Todd Kennedy and Dave Mensonides for their professional input and counsel while developing these rules.

**The Author:**

Dave Ralston has officiated flag football for more than a dozen years at all levels from children’s park leagues to NFL Flag National Championships at the ProBowl Games and international competitions in Ireland, Malaysia and 2024 World Flag Football Championships in Finland.



This work is the intellectual property of Dave Ralston and Ralston International Event Management ([www.ralstoninternational.com](http://www.ralstoninternational.com)) and was registered with the United States Copyright Office.

It may not be duplicated, distributed, modified or used in whole or part without permission. Contact [dave@ralstoninternational.com](mailto:dave@ralstoninternational.com) for more information.

The Certificate of Re-registration with the United States Copyright Office reference number is **TXu 2-427-015**.

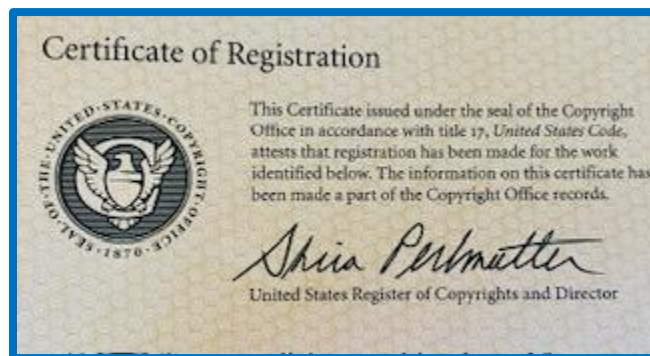




Photo Courtesy: Seattle Seahawks

# **THE FUTURE OF FOOTBALL IS FEMALE!!**