

# *MANHATTAN PARKS & RECREATION*



## **Rules & Regulations FLAG FOOTBALL Fall 2024**

**POWERED BY:**



A program of the Staley School of Leadership Studies





**MANHATTAN PARKS AND RECREATION STAFF**

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**GENERAL BYLAWS**

This program is strictly a *RECREATION LEAGUE* for the fun and enjoyment of those taking part. ***HAVE FUN!!***

**LEAGUE PURPOSE**

The purpose of this league is to provide an equal opportunity for youth, of any skill level, who wish to play under proper supervision. The program stresses sportsmanship and character development. Flag Football skills are to be developed while maintaining an appreciation for clean, friendly competition and a true spirit of cooperation between sponsors, managers, players, parents/spectators, and officials.

**I) Age/Grade:**

1. To be eligible, players must be enrolled in 1st through 8th grade in the 2023/2024 school year.
2. Divisions will be organized as follows:
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>
  - b. 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>
  - c. 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>
  - d. 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>
3. Participants must play in their respective grade division with the exception that a participant may play up in age group if approved by the participants guardian and the Recreation Supervisor.
  - a. Participants may NOT play down an age group for any reason.

**II) Team Organization:**

1. Before any child is permitted to participate in the flag football program, they must be registered with the Parks and Recreation Department. A registration period will be established before each season begins. A participant who does not sign up during this period will be placed on a waiting list and assigned to a team as spots become available.
2. Once a team is established, each child will remain on that team. No player may switch teams under any circumstances except when approved by the Recreation Supervisor.
3. Family members who are eligible for the same league may be placed on the same team for family convenience.
4. Head Coach/Assistant Coach Assignment Policy: Parents who volunteer as a head coach or assistant coach will have his/her child/children place on their team.
  - a. There can be a maximum of one head coach and two assistant coaches per team.
5. A player is not eligible for participation until all the following occur:
  - a. A player registration form is completed, signed by a parent/guardian and registration fee is paid.

- b. The player is approved for participation and assigned to a team by the Recreation Supervisor in charge of the program.
- c. Penalty: If a team uses a player who has not met each of these requirements, any game in which that player participated will be forfeited.

### **III) Protests:**

- 1. There will be no protests allowed in MPRD Youth Flag Football. Any rule infractions must be resolved before play continues in accordance to flag football rules. The decisions made by game officials and field supervisors are final.

### **IV) Unsportsmanlike Behavior:**

- 1. May result in penalties being imposed upon the offending individual, including coaches, participants and/or spectators. Penalties may include banishment from further participation in Recreation Department activities. Penalties will be decided by a committee made up of the Director of Parks and Recreation, the Recreation Superintendent, and the Recreation Supervisor in charge of the activity.
- 2. Each coach/team is subject to a sportsmanship evaluation performed by a site supervisor following each game.
  - a. Coaches, players, and spectators may be disciplined at the discretion of the Recreation Supervisor for actions detrimental to the game.

### **V) The Game:**

- 1. Start of each game, one or two captains from both teams meet officials for a coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. A coach may accompany the captains. The visiting team calls the coin toss.
- 2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. Loser of the toss chooses direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
- 3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) downs to score a touchdown.

- a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elect to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross the line to gain, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.
  - b. Offensive Teams MUST declare 4th down intent; "Play or Punt", when asked by the official and prior to the 'Ready for Play'.
  - c. Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of "Play" at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
  - d. If the declaration is "Punt" the ball changes possession and will be placed at the opposing Team's 5-yard line, 1st down, with NO option to change the declaration.
  - e. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield the ball changes possession and the new offensive Team starts at its own 5-yard line.
  - f. **NOTE:** 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade league will simply play 4 downs and if they fail to cross midfield or score in four downs, the opponent will be awarded possession on their own 5-yard line.
4. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

#### **VI) Terminology:**

**Boundary Lines** - The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.

**Line of Scrimmage** - (LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field

**Neutral Zone** - A virtual area that runs from sideline to sideline bounded by the forward and backward points of the football after it has been made ready for play.

**Line-to-Gain** - The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.

**Rush Line** - An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.

**Offense** - The team with possession of the ball.

**Defense** - The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.

**Passer** - The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.

**Rusher** - The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/ her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.

**Live Ball** - Refers to the period that the play is in action. Generally used regarding penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

**Dead Ball** - Refers to the period immediately before or after a play.

**Whistle** - Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime, or the end of the game.

**Inadvertent Whistle** - Official's whistle that is performed in error, particularly when the play should not be dead by rule.

**Charging** - An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.

**Flag Guarding** - An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand, arm or ball. May include the natural running motion

**Shovel Pass** - A legal forward pass across the LOS underhand, backhand or by pushing the ball forward.

**Lateral** - A backward or sideway toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.

**Unsportsmanlike Conduct** - A rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language

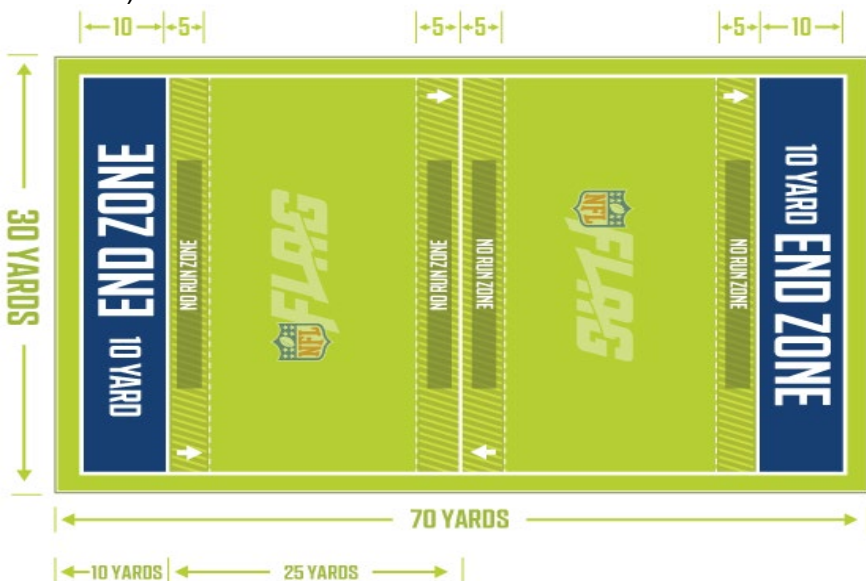
## **VII) Equipment:**

1. 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade will use a Pee Wee (Size 5) sized ball. 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade will use a Junior (Size 6). Game balls will be provided by MPRD at the field.
2. Shoes will be tennis shoes, sneakers, soccer shoes, or any shoe with rubber or plastic cleats. All metal spikes or cleats are prohibited. The legality of shoes will be determined by discretion of any official.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces (arm/leg) with exposed metals are not allowed.
  - a. A player wearing a cast may play by meeting the following requirement: Any hard and unyielding items on the hand, wrist, forearm, elbow, or upper arm unless padded with a closed-cell, slowly-recovery foam padding no less than 1/2" thick.
4. Pockets on shorts and pants are not allowed.
5. Players must remove all jewelry and hats. Winter beanies are allowed.
6. Jerseys must be tucked into short or pants.
7. Mouthpieces are strongly recommended. The mouthpiece must not be attached to the player in any way such as by a string around the player's neck.
8. Flags must be worn with one on the tailbone and the other two on the hips. When a player's flags are unreasonably out of position, it is the responsibility of the officials and the player's coach to correct the position as soon as a dead ball period occurs. The ball should not be put in play until the flags are positioned properly.
  - a. The free end of the belt must hang freely in front portion of the player's body.
  - b. Official Manhattan Parks and Recreation Department belts and flags will be provided for each game.



### **VIII) The Field:**

1. The field will be 30 yards wide by 70 yards with two 10-yard endzones.
  - a. No Run zones are located five yards prior to the line to gain and five yards prior to the endzone in the offense's direction. The no Run Zones do not apply to 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade.
2. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be passing plays, even with a handoff.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).



**IX) Officials' Duties:**

1. There will be two officials per field.
  - a. The officials will deliver all warnings, make all ejections of players and coaches, and confer with the field supervisor on problems and decisions.
2. A supervisor will be present at the field to help with equipment, and if any questions arise during the games, see the supervisor.

**X) Time Factors:**

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves. Outside of the last minute of play, the clock stops for halftime, injuries, and officials' discretion.
  - a. Under a minute in the second half: the clock will start and stop according to NFL Flag Rules
2. Halftime is three minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 40 seconds to snap the ball.
4. Each team has one 60-second timeout per half. Timeouts do not carry over.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. During a pass play there is a 7 second pass clock

**XI) Scoring:**

1. Touchdown: 6 Points. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether they want to attempt a 1-point PAT or a 2-point PAT. Once the PAT decision is made a timeout can be called to change. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
2. PAT 1 point at the 5-yard line. 2 points at the 10-yard line
3. Safety: 2 points
  - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm

- touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
4. PAT Defensive Touchdown: 1 Point. The defending team intercepts the ball and scores.
  5. If a team is winning by 35 points or more, that is the final score. If there is still time left, teams can keep playing but the score will not change.

**XII) Coaches, Parents, Spectators, and etc.:**

1. 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade can have one coach on the field. Coaches must stay out of the players way.
  - a. While coaching from the sideline, coaches cannot cross the halfway line.
2. All team parents and spectators must remain on the opposite side of the field during game.
3. Each team will provide one Down and Distance helper per game. This can be a parent, sibling, relative, etc. One will help with the line to gain position, yard marker, and keeping score. The other will help with line of scrimmage placement and 7-yard blitzing line placement.

**XIII) Ball Dead, Ball In Play:**

1. Any official of the game may declare the ball dead by signal or whistle.
2. The ball will be placed midway between the sidelines for each snap. After a dead ball, the ball will next be put in play at a spot in line with the spot where the ball was declared dead unless moved to another spot midway between the sidelines by an incomplete pass, penalty, etc.
3. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
4. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. Regarding the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
5. A live ball becomes dead because of the following acts:

- a. When the ball goes out of bounds in flight and strikes the ground, a player who is out of bounds, or an obstruction which is out of bounds.
- b. The 7 second pass clock expires.
- c. When any part of the ball carrier, other than his/her hands or feet, touches the ground.
- d. When a ball carrier is de-flagged.
- e. When a forward pass touches the ground or is caught simultaneously by opponents (dual possession).
- f. When a player without a flag belt, or without one or more flags, obtains possession of the ball. The ball is declared dead at the spot where possession was obtained.
- g. Any time the ball touches the ground after the snapper first moves the ball during the snap:
  - 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> the play is dead and placed at the previous spot. Replay the down.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> the play is dead. Ball is placed at the previous spot with a loss of down.
  - 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> the ball is declared dead at the spot where it touched the ground and loss of down.

***EXCEPTIONS***

- If a ball carrier fumbles the ball forward so that it first touches the ground in his opponent's end zone, the ball will be declared dead at the point where the runner lost possession. If the ball was fumbled forward intentionally, there may be a foul for an illegal forward pass.
6. There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball.
  7. Touchback/Safety. The team whose goal line is involved shall put the ball in play on its own 10-yard line by a snap after a touchback or safety.

***XIV) Formation and Action During the Snap:***

1. A down must start with a legal snap. An illegal snap causes the ball to remain dead.

2. The ball can be snapped between the snapper's legs, or the snapper can take a position on either side of the ball and snap it to an individual in the backfield.
3. The ball must be snapped backwards and in a continuous motion.
4. All players are eligible to receive the snap if they are two yards off the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.  
**EXCEPTION:** The quarterback can receive a direct hand-to-hand snap from the snapper.
5. The offensive team can position their players anywhere they so desire as long as they are on or behind their line of scrimmage. There are no requirements for a minimum or maximum number of offensive players on the line of scrimmage.
6. Only one (1) player may be in motion at the time of the snapping of the ball and the individual must be moving laterally or away from the opponent's goal line.
7. After a huddle or shift, all offensive players must come to an absolute stop and must remain stationary simultaneously without movement of hands, feet, head, or body for at least one second before the snap, or before a player goes in motion.

#### **XV) Running and Ball Carrier:**

1. The Ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
  - a. "Center Sneak" is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of a play.
  - b. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
  - c. Once the ball has been handed off, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated, and all defensive players are eligible to rush.

4. Flag guarding is not permitted and will be called for a penalty. The ball carrier may not use their hands or arms in any way to ward off the defender reaching for the flag belt
5. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
6. Spinning and cutting are allowed but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
  - a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
7. Ballcarriers may leave their feet while catching the ball, QB's passing progression, or if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player.
8. No Blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
9. Offensive players in proximity of the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier
10. Flag obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. Flag belts must be on the players hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
11. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
12. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

#### **XVI) Passing:**

1. All passes must be thrown with one hand from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and ball out of hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.
  - a. There is no intentional grounding.
  - b. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender.
  - c. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

3. The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
  - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).
  - b. If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.

**XVII) Receiving:**

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during conversions and/or overtime.

**XVIII) Rushing The Passer:**

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.

- a. A legal rush is:
  - i. Any rush from a point 7-yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
  - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
- b. A penalty may be called if:
  - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
  - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5-yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
  - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
  - iv. If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) CANNOT rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.
- c. Special circumstances:
  - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.
  - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.
5. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is once the flag is pulled.
  - a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.



### **XIX) Flag Pulling:**

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold, or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during a play while that player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends. The ball is placed where the belt started to come off.
5. If a player who has one or no flags in their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags from a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, ball, arm, or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

### **XX) Conduct:**

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered.
2. Offensive or confrontational language is NOT allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the officials will determine if a warning or immediate ejection is warranted.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders must give free releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:

- a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
  - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
  - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:
    - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area and
    - b. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
  8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
    - a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
    - b. Offense – 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

### **XXI) Penalties:**

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls. Coaches may not continually question judgement.
5. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal
8. Spot fouls in end zone: Defensive (Ball on one-yard line, first down)/Offensive (Safety)

### **XXII) 4-on-4 Adaptations:**

1. Each drive will start at the 25-yard with four downs to score.
2. No punting.

3. The quarterback will have 5 seconds to release the ball.
4. No rushing of the quarterback.
5. The ball can not be advanced through the line of scrimmage unless previously touched beyond the line of scrimmages.

### **Defensive Spot Fouls**

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic First Down
Holding	+ 5 yards and auto first
<i>Stripping the ball</i>	<i>+ 5 yards and auto first</i>

### **Offensive Spot Fouls**

<i>Screening, blocking, or running alongside ball</i>	<i>- 5 yards and loss of down</i>
<i>Charging</i>	<i>- 5 yards and loss of down</i>
<i>Flag Guarding</i>	<i>- 5 yards and loss of down</i>

### **Defensive Penalties**

Unnecessary Roughness	+ 10 yards and auto first
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	+ 10 yards and auto first
Offside	+ 5 from LOS and auto first
Illegal Rush	+ 5 from LOS and auto first
Illegal Flag Pull	+ 5 from LOS and auto first
Roughing the Passer	+ 5 from LOS and auto first

### **Offensive Penalties**

Unnecessary Roughness	- 10 yards and auto first
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	- 10 yards and auto first
Offside/False Start	- 5 from LOS and Loss of Down
Illegal Forward Pass	- 5 from LOS and Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	- 5 from LOS and Loss of Down
Illegal Motion	- 5 from LOS and Loss of Down
Delay of Game	- 5 from LOS and Loss of Down
Impeding the Rusher	- 5 from LOS and Loss of Down
Illegal Procedure	- 5 from LOS and Loss of Down
Taunting	- 5 from LOS and Loss of Down

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## REMINDERS FROM YOUR CHILD

- I'm a **KID**
- It's Just a **GAME**
- My Coach is a **VOLUNTEER**
- The Officials are **HUMAN**
- **NO** College Scholarships will be Handed Out Today

***Thank You & Have Fun!***

