



Flag Football Plan

Flag Football Dates:

Date	Event	Location-Address
10/18	Austin Regional Championships	Texas State University- 601 University Dr, San Marcos, TX 78666
10/18	Houston Regional Championships	TBD
10/25	HCAL State Championship	Monroe Memorial Stadium- 9500 McNeil Dr., Austin, TX 78750

District Alignments, Schedules, and Standings

View [HCAL Website](#)

Rosters and Player Eligibility

- The maximum number of players allowed on the final playoff roster is 20. (total amount of medals awarded)
- Teams can have more than 20 players during district play but may not have more than 20 players listed for playoffs.
- 8th graders are allowed to play at the HS level but must submit [MS Request HS Eligibility Form](#). Once approved, they must remain on the high school team and cannot play at the MS level.
- Players must be listed (First and Last Name) on the official rosters submitted via Team Sideline
- All Athletic Staff must be on the roster as well. (coaches, managers, etc.)
 - Anyone not listed is ineligible from participation or sitting on the bench.
- An Informal Roster check will be conducted mid-season to help Coaches/AD's/Athletic Coordinators prepare for the upcoming Playoff Games (infractions will be given and players will not be allowed to play if not listed on the rosters)
 - The HCAL Director will provide further guidance the week prior with clear directions.
- Students in grades K-5 will not be allowed to participate in any HCAL events.
- Game cards will be utilized prior to the start of every game and will be supplied by the home team.
 - Game cards be given to head referee prior to the start of the game and collected by the home team after the game for reference purposes
- Games can start with a minimum of 5 players and if at any point a team has less than 5 players, the game will end and be called a forfeit.

Game Day Logistics:

Game Time

Review the official game schedule published on the [HCAL Website](#).

- Any requests for game time changes must be approved and communicated by only the HCAL Director.
- A 15-minute grace period will be allowed before a game is called a forfeit. (if prior communication is not sent to the home team or/and HCAL Director)
 - If communication is provided by the away team, then there will be no forfeit, and adjustments will be made by officials to ensure games stay on time. (warmup will be limited and **no more than a 30-minute grace period will be allowed**)
 - Arrival more than 30 minutes with communication will be considered a forfeit.

Game Reports and Protests

- The home team is responsible for entering the official scores into the HCAL website by noon of the next business day
 - Failure to do so will incur in an infraction
 - **Game cards will be utilized for every game and will be provided by the home team. Game cards must be completed by both teams prior to the start of every game. They should be collected by the home team at the end of the game.**
- Protests and/or disagreements should be brought to the attention of both the liaison and HCAL Director within 24 hours of the end of the game. [HCAL Appeal/Protest Form](#)
- Discrepancies with scores will also be verified through the game officials' reports
- Only Eligibility or Compliance will be considered for protests – Officials' calls/rulings are not allowed to be protested.
- Game Scores – It is the responsibility of the visiting team to review within that 24-hour period and inform the HCAL Director of any discrepancies.

Playoff Format

- High School (Varsity)
 - Top 2 Teams from each district according to district record
 - Cross-District Format - ex. (D1 vs. D2)
 - Single Elimination
 - Winner of Regional Championship will play in the State Championship
- Middle School (Regional Championship only)
 - Top 2 Teams from each district according to district record
 - **Austin Region will have Top 3 from each district according to district record.**
 - Cross-District Format- ex. (D1 vs. D2)
 - Single Elimination

Tiebreaker Policy (playoff qualifier)

- Head-to-Head
- Forfeitures (exhibition forfeitures will be counted in the tiebreaker policy)
- Point Differential (district games only – maximum of +21 per game)
- Coin Flip

Team Honors

- District Champions
- Regional Champions
- State Champions (varsity only)

Player/Coach Honors (Varsity only)

- All-District
- All- Region
- All-State
- Coach of the Year -winner of State Championship
- All-Academic Team- any athlete who earns a 3.75 GPA or higher during the season.

Expenses

- The home team is responsible for the payment of athletic trainers, EMS, and all other game-related staff (security, announcer, facility, etc.)

Concessions

- Concessions will be operated by the host school only, unless otherwise agreed upon by both parties.

Administrator on Duty

- The home team must provide an administrator.
- Teachers, School Admin, Athletic Director/Coordinators, Counselors, or Coaches could all be the Administrator on Duty – Individual must not be directly involved in the game.
 - They present themselves prior to the start of the game.
 - Admin should support officials with safety concerns/logistics and should NOT interact with officials about calls or game management.
 - Admin should announce that there will be zero tolerance policy for behavior that doesn't provide a positive and safe environment.
 - The admin should ensure that Cheer teams/mascots should always be positioned on the side of their team and should be using positive language.

Emergency and Medical Personal

HCAL recommends that a Certified Athletic Trainer be present at all high school games (home team responsibility).

Professional Dress

When coaching and/or administering an HCAL athletic contest, the minimum dress is business casual. All member schools' staff are required to wear school polos and/or other related apparel that is professional and represents your school in a positive and professional manner. Jeans, t-shirts, hoodies, and cargo pants or shorts/ athletic shorts are NOT acceptable for HCAL Contest. Hats are allowed to be worn.

Governing Rules

HCAL Flag Football is played with 7 vs. 7 players. You can start a game with a minimum of 5 players.

The game is played like high school 7 vs. 7 football but with many exceptions as laid out in this rule book. The game is 40 minutes long with a running clock except for the final 2 minutes of each half. The game will start with a coin flipped into the air by the official with the visiting team making the call to determine which team will kick or receive and which end zone each team will defend. The end zone each team defends will rotate at the half. Also, the team starting on offense at the start of the game will start on defense at the start of the second half. Each team's goal is to advance the ball down the field to cross the endzone and score touchdowns. After scoring a touchdown, the scoring team will choose to attempt either a 1 or a 2-point conversion.

After a score or at the start of the game or the start of the second half teams will begin their next drive from their 20-yard line. Offenses can utilize passing or rushing plays to advance the ball, however teams are not allowed to use rushing plays when within their opponents No Rush Zone (within their opponent's 5-yard line, note this does not include plays where the line of scrimmage is the 5-yard line it must be within the 5-yard line and the goal line). The Quarterback is given a 4-second pass protection period at the start of each play to throw the ball. When the 4 seconds runs out or there is a pass / handoff of any kind to another player, or the Quarterback advances the ball past the line of scrimmage, the defense will be allowed to rush the offense. HCAL flag football is a non-contact sport that must utilize non-contact screen blocking. Screen blocking is only allowed on the line of scrimmage or behind the line. There is no down field screening allowed during the game. Players are "tackled" by pulling their opponents flags. The offense has 4 downs to either gain a first down or score a touchdown. First downs are obtained by passing or running either of the 20 yards or 40-yard lines marks regardless of where the drive began. If a team fails to score or gets a first down on their first 3 attempts, then they can choose to go for it on 4th down or punt the ball. At the end of regulation, the team with the most points wins the game. In the event of a tie, the game will advance to overtime.

Field Specifications

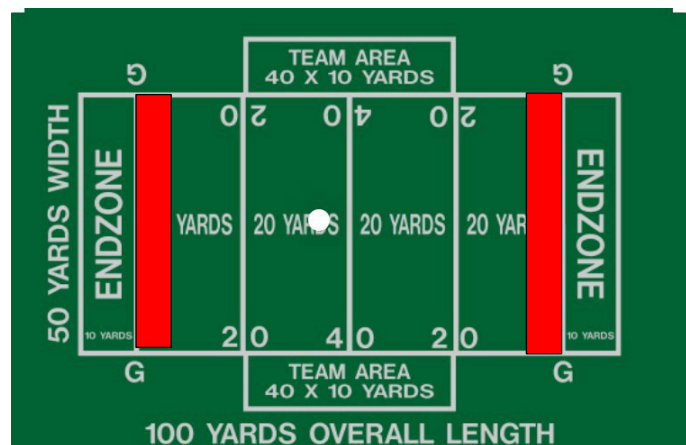
The field of play will be measured 80 yards in length and there is a 10-yard end zone at each end of the field of play, making the field and endzone layout 100 total yards in length. The field of play's width will vary within a certain range and location. HCAL Fields can be as narrow as 35 yards and as wide as 53.3 yards pending field locations and availability. Teams are to assemble opposite each other and away from the fan/spectator area when possible. Players and coaches (listed on the roster) are only permitted to congregate in between the two 40-yard markers. Officials will inspect the field for proper lining and conditions. Officials will make the final call on field conditions. It is the responsibility of the home team to ensure the field meets the expectations of the requirements for a safe and legal field. If requirements are not met, this can result in a forfeit.

HCAL Approved Flag Football Field Diagram

Length: 100 Yards

Width: Minimum 35 Yards – Maximum 53.3 Yards

Endzone Goal Line Zone - No Running plays when the offense is within the 5-yard line to scoring.



- 20 Yard Line – First Down
- 40 Yard Line – First Down
- 5-yard line – No Rush Zone
- No Rush Zone when the ball is within the 5-yard line.

Game Ball

Game balls must be of the following sizes:

- 6th-8th Grade: TDY / Touchdown Youth / Size 7 / Ages 12-14
- Varsity: TDS / Official / Size 9 / Ages 14 & Up
- All HCAL Game balls should be provided by the home team. However, both teams may use their own game balls for their own offensive plays pending the approval of the officials. Each team is responsible for providing its own balls for warm-ups

Game Length

- All HCAL Games consist of 40 total clock minutes.
- Each Contest will be divided into 2 20-minute halves.
- Each team will switch sides at the end of the first half.
- **A 40 second play clock will be utilized.**
- All HCAL Flag Football Games will use a running clock except for the last two minutes of each half.
- Officials will notify each team when 5 minutes and 2 minutes are remaining in each half. They will also notify teams competing when 30 seconds are remaining in each half (failure to do so will not change result of game).
- All competitions will have a five-minute intermission between halves, however in the event of overtime; there will be a three-minute intermission prior to overtime starting.

Timeouts

All teams will be allotted two 60 second time outs per half. However, In the event of overtime, both teams will be given one 30 second timeout per overtime period.

Overtime

- Overtime occurs if the teams' scores are tied at the end of the 2nd half and NCAA rules will be followed.
- Overtime will start with a coin toss, identical to the start of the game with a maximum of three overtime periods per regular season game. All regular season games that end with a tie after 3 overtime periods will result in a game tie. However, all Playoffs and Championship games will continue until a winner is declared. In addition to that, after the second overtime, each team must go for 2 points only.
- After the first overtime period, each team will alternate the order of ball possession. Also, if a team wins the coin toss at the beginning of the 1st overtime period they will receive the ball for the first overtime drive. However, the team that lost the first overtime coin toss will receive the ball first for the 2nd overtime period. All teams will start their own overtime drive from their opponent's 20-yard line.

Officials

- There will be two officials assigned to officiate each game.
- Only one official will act as the head official.
- In any game instance, the head official can overturn the assistant official's ruling only after discussion.
- The officials will keep the official game times and scores for each competition.
- Officials will inform the opposing team's coach of any player arriving late. If the late player's team was playing with less than 7 players when the late player arrived.
- Officials will be responsible for examining all uniforms and flag belts for eligibility and game compliance prior to each competition.
- Officials will inform both teams when there are approximately two minutes remaining in each half.
- Officials also ask team captains on 4th downs whether they will be punting or running a play from scrimmage.
- Officials will examine flag belts for compliance of scoring player following each successful score.
- Officials are to signal to the defense when the 4 seconds are ending the pass protection period.
- Officials will count out loud the 4 seconds and then drop their hand once the pass protection period has ended.

Uniforms

Teams are required to wear uniforms that meet the following criteria:

- Coloring
- Numbering
- If two teams wear similar colors deemed by the officials the away team will be required to wear different colored pennies for that competition
- No Jerseys, nor Pants/Shorts will be permitted if they are same color as the flags themselves which will be determined by the officials prior to each competition.
- Jerseys will require unique and correct numbering on the back of the jersey except for when wearing pennies.
- All team players' jersey numbers must match identically with official rosters submitted to HCAL.
- All Jerseys must be either tucked into shorts or pants and must always be underneath the flag belt during each competition.
- No Jerseys should ever hang out or be untucked over the flag belt for any reason during the game.
- Uniform jerseys with pockets are not allowed for any HCAL competitions.
- Mouth Guards are highly recommended.

Pants/Shorts

- Game Pants or shorts must not bear any belt loops, drawstrings (can be tucked in), or any other loose material that might prevent effective officiating or de-flagging, as determined by the officials.
- Shorts cannot have pockets and if they do have pockets they must be taped shut or they can be ruled inadmissible by referee or opposing team.
- Pants/Shorts that camouflage or resemble flag colors will not be permitted during any competition.

Flags

- All Teams are required to provide their own flags and flag belts.
- Team flag belts must have at least two flags, one on each right and left hip
- Flags must be a minimum of 12 inches in length, to be measured from the highest point of the flag belt down to the lowest point of the flag itself.
- All flags must be approved by officials before each competition begins.
- Flag belts must completely encircle the player's waist.
- Players are only permitted to wear one flag belt at a time.

HCAL does not regulate nor specify the brand or type of flag/flag belt that could be used during each competition. However, HCAL would like to recommend the Triple Threat flags or the Sonic Boom flags. Each of these types are commonly used in HCAL league play. See links below for places these flags may be purchased:

- Sonic Boom Flag Football Belt
 - [Flag-a-Tag Sonic Flag Football Belts | Dick's Sporting Goods \(dickssportinggoods.com\)](https://www.dickssportinggoods.com/Flag-a-Tag-Sonic-Flag-Football-Belts)
 - <https://www.amazon.com/Flag-Tag-Sonic-Boom-Colors/dp/B0039E3NHQ>
- All competition flags must be unaltered from their original purchased state. Flag belts with multiple flags spot locations will be required to remove the additional flag(s), to be in placement compliance on the right and left hips
- Flag belts with only 2 flags are permitted (left & right side of the hip)-

Athletes who cannot wear the standard flag belts because they do not fit or are unable to wear a standard flag belt due to size, that player in question is still eligible to play without the flag, but they cannot receive a pass. In addition to that a player without a flag can still catch a tipped pass, but they are marked down at the point of reception. HCAL does encourage teams to not order oversized flag belts to avoid these types of situations, so that every player on each team can be eligible receivers. If a player's waste is too large to fit a single flag belt, that player does not have to satisfy the flag uniform rules as detailed under uniforms section however he/she will be ruled ineligible as a ball carrier. Teams will not be permitted to attach multiple flag belts together to make one larger for a player to be eligible. Any flag tampering at any time is subject to a penalty and ejection of the violating player.

Jewelry

HCAL Flag Football will not permit any jewelry during any competition – this includes, but is not limited to:

- Wearing earrings or other types of piercing jewelry
- Wearing any type of chain or pendant
- Any extra-uniform article or accessory of décor worn for the purpose of appearance, as determined by officials and/or HCAL administration.

HCAL will allow the following exceptions for jewelry:

- The use of a medical bracelet that is taped down directly to the body.
- The use of religious items that are taped down directly to the body.

All Players who wear jewelry during play will be subject to unsportsmanlike conduct, as well as potential ejection.

Coin Toss

To start each competition the possession will be decided by a coin toss administered by the officials. The visiting team calls either "heads" or "tails" while the coin is mid-air following the initial flip and prior to landing on the ground. The officials will then rule the coin toss winner based on the result. The team that wins the coin toss can choose from one of the following options:

- To either receive ball or defend first
- Or they can decide which goal they want to defend first.

The team losing the coin toss can choose from the remaining of the two options, depending on the coin toss winner's selection. At the beginning of the 2nd half, the teams will switch which side of the field they defend and the team that received the ball to start the half will start the second half on defense.

Formations

- Teams can field a maximum of seven players on the field at one time.
- There must be 4 players on the line of scrimmage for offense including the center (regardless of number of players on the offense)
- Only one player can be in motion at one time.
- Defense does not have a minimum requirement except when receiving a punt (4 players)
- The defense can line up as far forward as the line of scrimmage

Substitutions

Substitutions can be made at any time in between plays.

Scoring

Scoring in flag football occurs when:

- A team's ball carrier advances the ball across the opponents' goal line prior to being de-flagged to earn six points for a (Touchdown)- **ball must cross the goal line.**
- Converting a 1- or 2-point conversion attempt

Conversions

- Conversions are singular plays that are earned by scoring a touchdown.
- Conversions can be taken from the opponent's five or ten-yard line and are worth one or two points.
- Conversions are earned following the successful progression of a ball carrier beyond the opponent's goal line.
- If the conversion attempt is intercepted and returned by the defending team across the conversion attempting team's goal line, the intercepting team will be awarded one or two points.
- **In the event of attempting a 1-point conversion and you are penalized 5 -10yds, you can rush but will only receive 1 point if converted.**
- If a team attempting a conversion allows a safety, then defending team will be awarded 2 points
- While attempting a 1-point conversion, teams are in the No Rush zone with the ball being placed on the 5-yard line.
- Touchdowns scored at the end of the first half will have the conversion attempt played immediately afterwards.
- Touchdowns scored at the end of the game or in the second drive of an overtime period will only have their conversion played out in the event that the conversion could impact the result of a tied game.

Safety

- A safety occurs when a ball carrier is ruled de-flagged, or the ball is ruled dead along or on the endzone side of the offensive team's goal line and awards the defending team two points.
- Exception will occur when a player receives a punt in the endzone and is de-flagged prior to progressing the ball out beyond his/her own goal line resulting in a touchback.
- This includes runners stepping out of bounds behind their own goal line, as well as balls ruled dead out of bounds behind the offensive team's goal line.
- All safeties result in awarding 2 points to the Defense and the Defense will obtain possession from their own 20-yard line.

Offense

- Teams can field a maximum of seven players on the field at one time.
- There must be 4 players on the line of scrimmage for offense including center. (Regardless of number of players on the offense)
- Only one player can be in motion at a time.
- Only one lateral per play in backfield. No down field laterals
- Teams have 40 seconds in between plays.
- At the start of each half or following a touchdown, teams taking possession of the ball will be spotted at the 20-yard line. (There are no kick-offs, however there are punts)
- Teams possessing the ball will run a series of plays, or downs, which can consist of both rushes and passes (Except when starting a play from within their opponents no rushing zone. In this case plays must only be forward passes)
- Teams will have four downs to reach either a first down or a touchdown.
- Teams must snap the ball within 40 seconds of the official spotting the ball.
- A first down is achieved by advancing the ball beyond 20 yards.
- Plays are whistled dead, and a down is lost after the following:
 - The ball carrier is de-flagged.
 - Ball carrier steps out of bounds
 - A touchdown or safety is scored.
 - The ball carrier's knee touches the ground.
 - Ball carrier's flag falls off.
 - Ball touches ground
- Flag Football does not have fumbles so the ball will be marked down at the point of impact of the ground.
- Please note that if a player drops a ball and another player catches it before the ball hits the ground, then they will have possession of the ball.
- A legal or illegal snap:
 - The center must fully snap the ball between his or her legs to their teammate.
 - The center is not eligible to snap the ball to his/herself.
 - This rule prohibits the snap from being passed to the side or in any way that causes the ball to not complete passage between the centers' legs.
- The center must immediately snap the ball. They cannot hold on to the ball for the entire 5 seconds. The officials will not consider the play to have begun until the ball has been clearly snapped to the Quarterback (see Quarterback definition)
- If the official cannot see the ball at any point during the pass protection period, he/she will end the pass protection period by signaling eligibility to rush the passer.
- Ball carriers are not permitted to use any part of their body to screen or guard their flags from being pulled. (See flag guarding in penalties section)
- No Rush Zone (5-yard line): If the offense is within their opponent's no rush zone, (See no rush zone definition) all players must utilize a forward pass. When within a no rush zone, teams are not allowed to use a rushing play. A Quarterback can still pitch or hand off the ball to another player, but that player is not allowed to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage except in the form of a forward pass. (Please note that once the quarterback hands off the ball the 4 second pass protection is forfeited)
 - **In the no Rush Zone: After 4 seconds the referees signal the defense can cross the line of scrimmage and the quarterback can continue the play, but they are not allowed to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage except in the form of a forward pass. (The Quarterback cannot run pass the line of scrimmage, they must pass)**
- If the offense crosses the line of scrimmage in the no rush zone in any form other than a legal pass, then the team will be given a loss of 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down.
- The offense can rush the ball if they choose if the ball is at their own 5-yard line.
- Officials will notify the teams when teams are beginning a play within the No Rush Zone if it is not clear.

On 4th down each team must declare whether they will opt to take a protected scrimmage kick or run a play from scrimmage (see special teams' section to read kicking guidelines)

- **Teams will not be allowed to fake punt.**

360-degree spinning is allowed; however, players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Any players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding and will be at the sole discretion of the officials. Some examples of spinning out of control are spinning into a defender, spinning continuously, and jump spinning. These are just a few examples that will be determined at the sole discretion of the officials.

Ball Carriers are not permitted to jump or leave the ground; such actions will be regarded as Flag Guarding. This does not include someone attempting to catch the ball.

- **EXCEPTION: The ball carrier must attempt to avoid any contact with other players. Therefore, the official may use their own discretion as to whether the ball carrier inadvertently violated the rules regarding jumping to avoid dangerous contact. As a result, a penalty may or may not be issued because of the play at the sole discretion of the official.**

Players scoring will be required to have their flag belts examined by officials for compliance following the play. Leaving the endzone prior to or impeding an official's examination will be subject to Unsportsmanlike Conduct and will be enforced on the following drive. If a player is found to be cheating by flag tampering will (solely determined at the discretion of the officials) then that individual will be kicked out of the game. The score will not be counted, and the play will be ruled a penalty for a 10-yard loss from the line of scrimmage, finally the team will get a loss of down.

Receiving

- All players are eligible receivers.
- The only players that cannot receive the ball are the ones that do not qualify due to not having proper equipment (flag belt)
- Defenders are not eligible to pull flags until the receiver has complete possession of the ball, as determined by the officials.
- In the event of a tipped ball, all players, including those ineligible to become a ball carrier, are eligible to receive the tipped ball.
- Players are not eligible to tie two flags together for safety reasons.
- To make a legal reception, the player must have at least one foot in bounds while possessing the ball, as determined solely by the officials.
- If a ball carrier loses his flags during a play, the ball will be whistled dead and the ball will be placed at the spot of the catch or where the flags fell off.
- If the ball had already been caught prior to the flags falling off.
- Ball carriers and defenders are not permitted to jump, leap or leave the ground.
- Exceptions:
 - Players can leave the ground to catch or swat a ball.
 - The quarterback can leave the ground in the back field during the 4 second pass protection to make a pass.
 - A player may take certain action to avoid a defender if safety is a serious concern because of the play. In this instance, an official may use their own discretion as to whether to enforce a penalty because of the play at the sole discretion of the official.

Rushing

- All offensive players can become eligible rushers.
- **A quarterback can rush from the shotgun position. (2-3 yds off the line of scrimmage)**
- The only players that cannot rush the ball are the ones that do not qualify due to not having proper equipment (proper flags). For example, we have had players that will play center, but they are too big to wear a flag belt. They are eligible to play without the flag, but they cannot rush the ball or be a ball carrier. We do encourage teams to order oversized flags in these situations, so the players can be eligible rushers.
- Ball carriers and defenders are not permitted to jump, leap, or leave the ground.
- 360-degree Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull
- Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding. This will be at the sole discretion of the officials some examples of spinning out of control are spinning into a defender, spinning continuously, and jump spinning.
- These are just a few examples again, this will be determined at the sole discretion of the officials.
- Centers must snap the ball before they can become an eligible rusher.
- If a ball carrier loses his flags during a play, the ball will be whistled dead, and the ball will be placed at the spot of the catch or where the flags fell off.
- Teams can run a rushing play at any time except when their team is starting a play from within the No Rush Zone

Screening

- Offensive line screeners used to protect the ball before the offense crosses the line of scrimmage and Offensive line screeners must be stationary.
- There will be no down field screening, however screeners on or behind the line of scrimmage before the ball passes the line of scrimmage will be allowed.
- Once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage no more screening will be allowed
- Players already down field must remain stationary after a completed offensive pass.
- Lineman screeners must not initiate contact of any form with defenders in order to complete a legal screen.
- Screeners must keep their hands to their side and cannot place themselves so close to a defender that they force contact, as determined at the discretion of officials.
- Screeners are not permitted to lock arms or connect multiple players in any way.
- Screeners on the line are permitted to move briefly after the snap in order to screen an opponent or get into position but never to initiate or force contact with a defender.
- Contact deemed unintentional by officials does not require subsequent penalty and will be determined at the sole discretion of the officials.
- Offensive players cannot run alongside a ball carrier to block or screen.

Punting

- On 4th down, teams must declare whether they will opt to take a protected scrimmage kick or run a play from the line of scrimmage.
- The kicking team must line up no less than four players on the line of scrimmage.
- The receiving team must line up no less than four players on the line of scrimmage.
- The kicker must be at least five yards behind line of scrimmage.
- Kickers must kick the ball immediately following receipt of snap.
 - No fake punts will be allowed.
- In any instance, teams can change their decision following a timeout or replayed 4th down in the event of a penalty.
- Uncaught kicks are ruled dead at the spot of contact with the ground.
- Snaps that result in the ball contacting the ground prior to the punter receiving the snap will be ruled down at the spot of contact with the ground, resulting in a turnover on downs.

Defense

- Defenders are not permitted to initiate contact with offensive players beyond de-flagging.
- Defenders are not permitted to leave the ground to de-flag a ball carrier.
- Defenders can only leave the ground to catch or swat away the ball.
- Defenders are not permitted to make contact of any kind with the receiver.
- De-flagging receivers prior to reception of the ball will be regarded as Pass Interference
- Intentional versus incidental contact is to be determined solely by officials.
- Stripping / swatting or attempting to strip or swat the ball will not be allowed and it will be penalized as an illegal contact penalty. The ball is an extension of the ball carrier's body.
- No Strip Fumbles and No Strip Sacks
- Coaches are to instruct their athletes to go for the flags and not the ball.
- Defenders cannot leap or dive to grab a flag.
- Defenders can contend for a juggled ball to obtain possession.
- If both the offense and the defense catch the ball simultaneously, the tie will be given to the offense. This decision will be solely determined by the officials.
- The defense can blitz 1 player (1 yd off the line of scrimmage) up to 3 times per half. Exceptions are below:
 - If teams don't use them in each half the blitz plays do not roll over.
 - Not during 4th down punts
 - Not in the No Rush Zone
 - Not in overtime
- Blitzers/Blitzer's must avoid contact with offense at all costs.
- Intentional versus incidental contact is to be determined solely by officials.

Pass Rushing

The Defense cannot rush the quarterback for the first **four** seconds following the snap; this is referred to as the Pass Protection Period. The referee will signal to players the end of four seconds by lowering his/her arm. At this point the defense can pass the line of scrimmage.

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 - Not during 4th down punts
 - Not in the No Rush Zone
 - Not in overtime
 - Blitzers/Blitzer's must avoid contact with offense at all costs.
 - Intentional versus incidental contact is to be determined solely by officials.
 - There is no rollover

Exception:

- Any exchange from QB to another player ends the pass protection period. If the Quarterback (See QB Definition) laterals/ handoffs or exchanges the ball to another player, then the defense can go after the ball carrier at that point and the pass protection period has been forfeited for the remainder of that play.
- If the quarterback passes the line of scrimmage the Pass Protection Period ends
- If the official cannot see the ball at any point during the pass protection period, he/she will end the pass protection period by signaling eligibility to rush the passer.
- Upon crossing the line of scrimmage, any ball carrier can be de-flagged.
- It is one of the 3 blitz pass defenses can be used per half.

Offensive Penalties

- Delay of Game. 5 yards replay down. Clock stops. Stop Play
- Flag Guarding. 10 yards from the spot of the foul, loss of down
- Flag Tampering. 10 yards, loss of down. The offender may be ejected.
- Illegal Forward Pass/lateral. 5 yards, loss of down
- Illegal Kick. 10 yards replay down.
- Illegal Motion. 5 yards repeat down. Stop Play
- Illegal Formation. 5 yards repeat down. Stop Play
- Offensive Pass Interference. 15 yards, loss of down
- False Start. 5 yards, **repeat down**.
- Too many players on the field. 5 yards, loss of down
- Illegal Screening/Contact. 10 yards from the spot of the foul, loss of down

Defense Penalties

- Illegal Contact. 10 yards, automatic 1st down
- Illegal Flag Pull. 10 yards from the spot of the foul and automatic 1st down (in the event that the penalty took place behind the line of scrimmage, the 10 yards will be awarded from the line of scrimmage)
- Excessive illegal flag pulling may be treated as Unsportsmanlike Conduct as deemed appropriate by the officials.
- Off-sides 5 yards repeat down.
- Illegal Formation. 5 yards repeat down. Stops Play
- Pass Interference. Ball spotted at foul up to 15 yards, automatic 1st down.
- Excessive blitzing. 15 yards, automatic 1st down. The ball advanced to the 5-yard line if penalty happens at opponent's 20- yard line.
- Too many players on the field. 5 yards, automatic 1st down

Unsportsmanlike Guidelines

Unsportsmanlike Conduct 15 yards, potential ejection. Unsportsmanlike Conduct is a penalty that is used when a coach, fan, or player's actions interferes with the officials' abilities to maintain a positive, and safe atmosphere for the game.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Spiking the ball or spinning the ball
- Unsportsmanlike TD celebration
- Aggressively returning the ball to officials
- Aggressively throwing flags after a tackle
- Gestures or taunts directed at the opposing team or team's fans.
- Wearing jewelry
- Verbal abuse of officials
- Any belligerent physical contact
- Players leaving the sidelines.
- Players demanding rule clarifications or interpretations.
- Racial or religious remarks
- Aggressive contact with officials
- Any other act determined unsportsmanlike as deemed appropriate by the officials or HCAL administration.

Penalties for Unsportsmanlike Conduct start at 15 yards and can incur additional penalties as deemed appropriate by the officials.

Players committing Unsportsmanlike Conduct infractions are subject to immediate ejection, as deemed appropriate by officials.

Depending on the severity of the infraction, players ejected are subject to further suspension for additional games as deemed appropriate by league administration.

Teams and fans committing persistent Unsportsmanlike Conduct infractions will be subject to forfeiture of the game result, as deemed appropriate by officials.

Teams not adhering to the HCAL Handbook or teams that pose substantial risk to the safety of others, as determined by HCAL administration, may have the remainder of their season forfeited.

Procedures for Enforcing Penalties

- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines the penalty.
- All penalties can be declined by the opposing team's coach.
- If penalties are called on both teams during a play, penalties will offset.
- Defensive penalties committed from scrimmage plays starting within the team's No Rush Zone will result in the ball being spotted halfway between the line of scrimmage and the defense's goal line.
- If any team commits multiple Unsportsmanlike Conduct infractions during a play, they will be subject to the aggregate consequence(s) of the penalties.
- Penalties called after the play is ruled dead will not be weighed against those called during the play.
- Offensive penalties committed from scrimmage plays starting within the (their own) No Rush Zone will result in the ball being spotted halfway between the line of scrimmage and the offense's goal line.
- The one exception here is that if one of the two teams was penalized for Unsportsmanlike Conduct, in which case the team penalized for Unsportsmanlike Conduct would incur the full consequence(s) of the infraction.
- If both teams commit Unsportsmanlike Conduct infractions, each team will incur the full consequence(s) of the penalty.
- Coaches are permitted to request clarification from the officials in between plays as to the calls made during the game. (Excessive unnecessary requests may not be addressed)
- Clarification request must be made immediately following the play in question, and prior to the next play starting. Instances include:
 - Inadvertent Whistle
 - In the instance that the official unintentionally blows his/her whistle
 - The offense has the option to either accept the result of the play at the spot of the whistle or can opt to replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

Concussions

Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.