

## Flag Football Rules

Welcome to the 6th season of Flag Football! As we venture into a new season, we will be actively observing league play to ensure improvements are made to enhance the quality of this program. We ask that all players, spectators and coaches remain patient with staff as we continue to work toward improving into a premiere program and product for the community.

### **Scorekeeping/Standings**

- Scores and standings will be kept for all divisions. The major purpose of this league is recreation and enjoying the game of football.

### **Practices**

- Will be added to your Teamsideline app as determined by your coach. Practices can be scheduled every other week.

***IHSA Boys Football Rules will be in effect with the following modifications. In the event of a conflict between IHSA rules and Niles Park District rules, NPD rules will take precedence. In the event a rule is not listed in NPD rules, IHSA rules will take precedence.***

### **Equipment/Uniforms**

- Grades 1-2 will be using Wilson K2 Pee Wee Ball
- Grades 3-4 will be using Wilson TDJ Junior Ball
- Grades 5-6 will be using Wilson TDY Youth Ball
- All players must wear the official NPD t-shirt during games.
- All players must wear tennis shoes, or rubber molded cleats. (metal cleats are prohibited) • Each player must have their shirts tucked in or have a shirt short enough so there is a minimum of 4 inches from the bottom of the shirt to the player's waistline.
- Helmets, shoulder pads, etc. are prohibited.
- Flag belts must be worn properly so that the flags hang free and clear of obstructions. Belts may not be tied or wrapped to keep from coming off.
- Players are recommended to wear a mouth piece; however, they are not mandatory.
- Foam knee pads, elbow pads, or arm pads are allowed, but not required. Players with any type of hard cast will not be permitted to play.

### **Players\*\***

- 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade games will be played 8 on offense and 8 on defense with a minimum of 5 players. • 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade games will be played 7 on offense and 7 on defense with a minimum of 5 players. • 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade games will be played 7 on offense and 7 on defense with a minimum of 5 players. • Coaches must try their best to get each player equal field time in every game and rotate offensive and defense positions.
- Each player must be registered in the current program

***\*\*All players, in each grade level, are able to catch the ball.***

### **The Field**

- The field will be 50 yards long and 32 yards wide, with 8 yard deep end zones.
- Pylons will be set up at the corners of each end zone.
- First down will be Mid Field and will be identified with pylons on each end.



### **Substitutions**

- Incoming player must be on field before the ball is put in play.
- Replaced player shall be off the field before the ball is put in play
- A team allowed an official's timeout for an injured player is restricted to that replacement. The injured player must leave the game for at least one play.
- A substitute may legally enter the game whenever the ball is dead.
- No player can enter the field of play once the ball is snapped regardless of the number of players on the field at the time.

## **Length of Game**

### 1. Time

- The game shall consist of two, twenty (20) minute halves.
- Half time will be two (2) minutes.
- Games will start on time and not be delayed for warm-ups.

### 2. Clock Stoppage

- There will be a running clock during game play for the entire half and first 19 minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup> half. •

During regular game play, the clock will stop in the following situations:

- Called time outs, either by a team or an official
- Injuries
- In the final 1 minute of the second half, the clock will stop:
  - When a ball carrier runs out of bounds
  - For an incomplete pass
  - If there is a change in possession
  - Touchdown
  - After a penalty
  - For any situation outlined in the IHSA Rules not covered above
- If the clock is stopped, for whatever reason, it will begin to run again after the ball is snapped for the next play, OR after a touchdown when the ball is snapped on the next series.
- If the score differential is 17 points or more, the clock will run the last minute.

### 3. Timeouts

- Each team will be allowed (2) two, 30 second timeouts per game. Referee will manage the time within a timeout •
- Timeouts may be requested by a player or the coach

### 4. Huddles

- Once the referee sets the ball, teams will be allowed 30 seconds to huddle, call a play, and initiate the play •

The clock will begin with the referee's signal

- Teams taking longer than 30 seconds will receive a 5-yard penalty. At the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade level this will be encouraged, but not directly penalized.
- Referee will place the ball at the line of scrimmage. Referee will then line up on the line of scrimmage. Coaches are encouraged to check to make sure all of their offensive players are onside or behind the ball placement.

## **Scoring**

- Should an individual cross the goal line, the play will end, and 6 points will be awarded for a touchdown. • Teams will have the option to convert 1 or 2 points after a touchdown. One (1) point try will be from 5 yards and must be a pass only play. 2-point try will be from 10 yards and can be run or pass.
- After the extra try, the ball will be placed at the "start" (marked X on the field) line and the opposing team takes over possession.



- **Lopsided Games:** In an effort to keep up good sportsmanship, if a team is up by 21 points or more, their starting QB must be replaced. There will also be no PAT's (point after touchdown) for the winning team until the margin is back within 28 points.

## Referees

- Each game will have at least two referees. Their duties are as follows:
  - Make all decisions regarding forfeits and starting games (includes starting games on time and ending at the time limit).
  - Settle any disputes between coaches, players, etc.
  - Distribute necessary equipment.
  - Check fields for safety hazards and make all decisions regarding playing conditions of the field
  - Make all rule interpretations, call penalties, control the pace of the game, and any other duty necessary to the completion of the game. All referee decisions will be final.
  - Official scorekeeper will oversee the game clock

## Offensive Rules/Guidelines

### • **Offensive Formation**

- The offensive team can have a maximum of 5 players on the line of scrimmage. Other players must be at least one yard back from the line of scrimmage.
- 7 on 7 is the max on the field for grade levels 3-6. *1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade will play 8 on 8*
- One player must snap the ball (the Center). Every player is eligible to go out for a pass.
- No offensive player is required to start in a three- or four-point stance, but it is allowed.
- All players must be still for one second before the ball is snapped, excluding a legal man in motion. Motion is defined as one player running parallel to or back from the line of scrimmage.
- Quarterbacks can't run past line of scrimmage with ball in hand. Also, Quarterbacks must release the ball via handoff, lateral, pitch, or pass within 7 seconds after the ball is snapped. If the quarterback still has possession after 7 seconds, without his flag being pulled, it is considered a sack and a completed down.

## Running Plays

- Running plays are defined as those which involve a handoff, backwards lateral, or pitch originated behind the line of scrimmage, and the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage.
- Teams may use as many running plays in a series of downs as they wish.
- Running plays are not permitted within 5 yards of the end zone
- *Running plays are not permitted 1 point conversion attempts. They are allowed on 2 point conversion attempts*
- Ball carriers may not leave their feet at any time (either diving or jumping with the ball). ○ If this occurs, the play will be called dead and the ball spotted at the point where the ball carrier left his feet.
- Diving for a first down or a touchdown is not permitted.
- Spinning is not permitted by ball carrier
- Quarterbacks are not permitted to run pass the line of scrimmage with the ball in hand.

## Passing Plays

- Passing plays are defined as those plays that involve one forward pass.
- Teams may initiate as many passing plays in a series of downs as they wish.
- **Quarterbacks passing the ball will have 7 seconds to release a pass or the play will be whistled dead.** • After receiving the ball, the ball carrier may not leave his feet at any time. However, if attempting to receive a pass, the receiver and defender may leave their feet to catch the ball.
- Interceptions may be run back up to a 17 point lead, after that it becomes a spot possession.
- Receivers must have at least one foot touching in bounds to complete a pass.

## First Downs

- There will be 3 downs on each side of the field. Mid-field will be the first down line. If starting inside midfield, there will be no 1<sup>st</sup> downs.





- The offensive team can have a 4<sup>th</sup> down try on their side of midfield. If the offensive team does not succeed in advancing past midfield on that 4<sup>th</sup> down, the defensive team gains possession at the point where the offensive team falls short of the line to gain (Midfield). If 3 downs are completed in the other team's side of the field, the opposing team takes over at the "start" (marked X on the field) line

### Defensive Rules/Guidelines for Rushing the Passer and Crossing the Line of Scrimmage

- The defense may rush up to a maximum of 2 players but are not required to rush any.
  - a. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of ten (10) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
  - b. Once the ball is handed off, the (10) ten-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
  - c. The referee will designate a Rush Line (10) ten yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
    - i. A legal rush is:
      1. Any rush from a point (10) ten yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
      2. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
      3. If a rusher leaves the rush line early, they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
      4. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
    - ii. A penalty may be called if:
      1. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS).
      2. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Offsides (5 yards LOS).
      3. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed – Illegal rush (5 yrs LOS).
    - iii. Special circumstances:
      1. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, seven second clock in effect.
      2. If the rusher leaves the (10) ten-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced.
  - d. Players rushing the Quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. The defense may attempt to block a pass provided they do not strike the passer.
  - e. Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a 10-yard penalty. (Automatic First Down)
  - f. Offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has a CLEAR PATH to the QB and any interference that would impede his/her path to the QB will be considered screening.
  - g. Any rusher that contacts the Quarterback that is deemed Unnecessary Roughness, shall lose the privilege to rush the QB for the continuation of that drive. If a 2nd Unnecessary Roughness Penalty is called Against
    - i. the same player - the player shall be ejected from the game, and the offending team loses the ability to rush the QB for the remainder of the game
    - ii. A different player - the offending team loses the ability to rush the QB for the remainder of the game. 2 Unnecessary Roughness penalties against the same team - the team forfeits any defensive rushing.
  - h. A Sack occurs if the QB's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the

QB's feet are when the flag is pulled.

i. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

- *Rushing is not allowed in the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade division*
- In the 1<sup>st</sup>/ 2<sup>nd</sup> grade division, a Defensive line will be established 5 yards from the line of scrimmage. Defenders will be allowed to encroach this 5-yard line on the offensive snap of the football, but nobody is allowed to cross the line of scrimmage unless the offensive team completes a handoff, a backwards lateral, or pitch. When the line of scrimmage is within 3 yards of the midfield line or the goal line, the defense will be allowed to line up 2 yards from the line of scrimmage to offset the offensive advantage that normally occurs with the defensive line 5 yards from the line of scrimmage. It is only in these 2 instances that the defensive line can be closer than 5 yards at the snap of the ball.

### **Fumbles**

- The defense may not strip the ball.
- Fumbles are not free balls. If a ball carrier, after having full possession of the ball, drops the ball to the ground, the play will be whistled dead, and the offensive team retains possession at the spot of the fumble (not where the ball lands).
- If a ball is fumbled, does not touch the ground, and is caught in the air by any player, the receiving player may run with the ball.
- The offensive team cannot fumble the ball forward.
- If the referee determines that a fumble forward was intentional, the team will be assessed an illegal forward pass penalty.
- If the ball is fumbled backwards (not parallel), the receiver may run with the ball.
- If the defensive team catches a fumbled ball, they may run the ball back.
- If a fumble occurs on fourth down, and the offensive team did not obtain a first down, the opposing team will gain possession at the point of the fumble.

### **De-Flagging**

- The defensive player only needs to take one flag from the ball carriers' belt to stop progress. Defensive players must hold flag in the air after pulling a flag off of ball carrier.
- Diving for a flag is allowed, but for safety reasons, is not encouraged.
- If the flag falls off at any time for any reason, the ball carrier is considered down.
- The ball carriers' flag must be accessible at all times and in all ways.
- Ball carriers may not tie the flags to the belts.
- Flags must be completely uncovered. This includes by arms, hands, the ball, clothing etc. • If it is determined by the referee that the flag was inaccessible, flag guarding will be called. • After scoring a touchdown, the referee will remove the ball carriers' flags to make sure no violations occurred. Please instruct your players to cooperate with the officials.
- When a player is downed, the ball will be spotted at the point where the flag was pulled or fell off.

### **Dropped Flags**

- Should a player's flag fall off during play in the back field, the ball is dead and spotted at the line of scrimmage. • If a player's flag falls off after the line of scrimmage the ball carrier is considered down at the point of the fallen flag.
- If a player flag falls off before a pass is caught, the player is considered down and the ball is spotted at the point of the catch.

### **Kick-Offs**

There will be no kickoffs. Before the game, the referee will have a coin toss. The winning team can select to start the first half or second half with the ball with the losing team going opposite of the winning team (i.e. Team 1 wins the toss and selects ball to start the game. Team 2 will get ball to start the second half)



When a team scores, the opposing team will start their series from the “start” line / 5 yard line.

## **Dead Ball**

- The ball is considered “dead” in the following situations:
  - When the ball carriers’ flag is pulled or falls off regardless if accidental or intended.
  - When two opposing players simultaneously catch the ball. The offensive team retains possession.
  - If any part of the ball carriers’ body (other than hands and feet) touch the ground.
  - If the ball is fumbled, it belongs to the ball carrier’s team at the point of the fumble.
  - At any point when the referee blows the whistle, whether intentional or accidental.
  - A dead ball results after each completed play.
  - Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
  - When the ball hits the ground.

## **Blocking (blocking will not be allowed at any point)**

- All players must remain on their feet, unless incidental contact knocks them down.
- No blocking at any point including down field blocking
- Shadow blocking is not allowed
- Defensive players may not use their hands to push offensive player out of the way.
- Throwing, pushing, or knocking down offensive or defensive linemen is not permitted.

## **Penalties**

- **Offensive penalties include:**
  - Offsides/Illegal Formation: any player lined up in the neutral zone (the length of the ball) after the snap. Dead ball foul, five (5) yard penalty.
  - Illegal Motion: A player on the line who moves before the ball is snapped, or makes contact with a defensive player before the ball is snapped, or any back who moves forward before the snap, or more than one back in motion at the same time. Dead ball foul, five (5) yard penalty.
  - Delay of Game: Taking more than 30 seconds to begin the next play, from the time the ball is spotted. Dead ball foul, five (5) yard penalty.
  - Offensive Pass Interference: Occurs when the offensive receiver physically prevents a defensive player from intercepting the ball by making contact. Five yard (5) penalty, loss of down.
  - Illegal Forward Pass: Any pass made from ahead of the line of scrimmage. Five (5) yard penalty, loss of down.
  - Offensive Holding / Illegal Block: defined as grasping the opponents clothing or body, thus preventing movement. Five (5) yard penalty from the line of scrimmage.
  - Offensive Roughness/Illegal Contact: Any contact in the act of blocking, involving striking with elbows or contact above the shoulders or below the waist, or pushing the back, whether flagrant or accidental. Ten (10) yard penalty from the line of scrimmage.
  - **Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Any action deemed unsportsmanlike by either referee, including language, flagrant contact, disrespect to officials, or spiking the ball at any time. Includes unnecessary roughness. 10-yard penalty from the original line of scrimmage, loss of down, and possible ejection from the game. Two (2) unsportsmanlike penalties in one game will result in player being ejected from game and face possible suspension from league (Automatic First Down)**
  - Flag Guarding: Any action that prevents the defensive player from taking the ball carrier’s flag, including arm swipes and protecting the flag with the ball, hand or arm. Player is down as the spot of the flag guard. 10-yard penalty and loss of down.





## **Defensive Penalties**

- Offsides: Any player lined up in the neutral zone (the length of the ball) after the snap. Dead ball foul, five yard penalty, repeat the down/1<sup>st</sup> down if crossing midfield.
- Encroachment: Contact with an offensive player before the snap. Dead ball foul, five yard penalty, repeat the down/1<sup>st</sup> down if crossing midfield
- Illegal Rush: Occurs when more than 2 defensive players cross the line of scrimmage before a quarterback handoff, backwards lateral, or pitch. Also, occurs when the rusher lines up less than 10 yards and crosses the line of scrimmage before while the quarterback has possession. Dead ball foul, five yard penalty, repeat the down/1<sup>st</sup> down if crossing midfield.
- Pass Interference: Occurs when the defensive back physically prevents an offensive player from receiving the ball by making contact. Offensive possession at the spot of the foul, automatic first down (regardless of previous position).
- Holding: defined as grasping the opponents clothing or body, thus preventing movement. Five (5) yard penalty, 1<sup>st</sup> down.
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Any action deemed unsportsmanlike by either referee, including language, flagrant contact, disrespect to officials, or spiking the ball at any time. Includes unnecessary roughness. 10 yard penalty from the original line of scrimmage, automatic first down, and possible ejection from the game. Two (2) unsportsmanlike penalties in one game will result in player being ejected from game and face possible suspension from league
- Tackling (with or without intent): Any time a defensive player physically brings the ball carrier to the ground. 10 yard penalty from the spot of the foul, automatic first down (depending on severity of tackle may cause ejection from game).
- Defensive Roughness/Illegal Contact: Any contact in the act of blocking, involving striking with elbows or contact above the shoulders or below the waist, or pushing the back, whether flagrant or accidental. Ten (10) yard penalty from the line of scrimmage.

## **Offsetting Penalties**

- In the event one or more penalties are called against on each team, the penalties cancel out and the down is replayed.
- If unsportsmanlike penalties or unnecessary roughness penalties occur after the play is whistled dead, the penalties will be enforced. Players may be ejected if the violations are flagrant.
- Multiple Penalties
- If multiple penalties are called against a team, the opposing team will get to choose which one penalty to enforce.

## **Blood Rule**

- A player with a bloody injury or blood on his/her uniform must leave the game. The player may not return to the game until the wound is no longer bleeding, the wound is covered or the uniform is changed.
- Coaches o Coaches may be on the field during before the start of game play but cannot interfere with any players on the field. They should remove themselves from the field of play before the ball is snapped.
  - o Coaches will be given all necessary equipment to run practices.
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## **Coaches on Field**

- For 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade, 1 offensive and 1 defensive coach is allowed on the field. They can call the play in the huddle and then move behind their furthest back player before the ball is snapped.
- For 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade, coaches can give a play in the huddle but then must move to the sideline near the down referee before the ball is snapped.

## **Slaughter Rules**

- Clock Stoppage – In the last 1 minute, the clock will run if the score differential is 17 or more. • If team is winning by 21 points or more the following will happen:



- a. The team in the lead will always take possession at their own 5 yard line
  - b. Losing team will have 4 downs to score once they cross midfield.
  - c. Winning team will not be allowed to have immediate rusher.
  - d. Lopsided Games: In an effort to keep up good gamesmanship, if a team is up by 21 points or more, their starting QB must be replaced. There will also be no PATs for the winning team until the margin is back within 21 points.
- Max score differential is 24 points for standings.

**End of Game**

- Opposing coaches and players will line up at mid-field and waive/salute the opposing team. •
- Field must be cleared quickly as time is of the essence as the facility schedule is extremely tight.

*The Niles Park District reserves the right to alter, change, or delete any rule from the program in order to improve the league. Any rule change, all the coaches will be notified via email.*

**Defensive Spot Fouls**

Stripping	+5 yards from spot, tack onto end of play
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**Offensive Spot Fouls**

Screening or blocking	-5 yards from spot and loss of down
Flag guarding	-10 yards from spot and loss of down

**Defensive Penalties**

Defensive unnecessary roughness – Tackling, Illegal Contact	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside and Encroachment	+Five yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 10-yard marker)	+Five yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+Five yards from spot and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+Five yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+Five yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down



## Offensive Penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness – Tackling, Blocking, Clipping, Illegal Contact	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down

Offside / false start	-Five yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal forward pass (Throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage or 2 forward passes)	-Five yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-Five yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion (More than one person moving at the snap of the ball)	-Five yards from line of scrimmage
Delay of game	-Five yards from line of scrimmage

