

# VILLAGE SPORTS FLAG FOOTBALL GENERAL RULES

Read these rules first for any style you play, as they apply to any style we may offer, then also make sure and check out the style-specific rules in their specific chapters that are unique to their particular format.

## **RULE 1: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

### **SECTION 1. GENERAL GOVERNING PHILOSOPHY**

**Article 1.** We declare the USA Flag the self-appointed national governing organization of the sport of flag football through common consent of our participating teams. We are aware that many leagues play with a variety of rule books that differ from USA Flag, however USA Flag is the ultimate governing body for all forms and styles of the sport.

**Article 2.** Our officials administer the rules of this league not any other organization (past or present). When more details are needed than are outlined in our abridged USA Flag Rule Book(s), game officials will defer to the most current National Federation of State High Schools Rule Book.

**Article 3.** The ball will be spotted wherever the ball was at the time of the flag pull or the ball carrier left the field-of-play.

**Article 4.** Order of tie breakers to determine seeding for playoffs are as follows: Overall record, head-to-head: (only applies if every team with the same record played each other directly), point differential, points against, points scored, battle points, registration date, coin toss.

### **SECTION 2. REQUIRED PERSONAL CONDUCT**

**Article 1.** Players, coaches and spectators must keep their comments profanity free. Disrespectful language, racist, sexist, homophobic remarks, obscene gestures/behavior, and bullying are prohibited.

**Article 2.** Foul play will not be tolerated. Any staff member that hears or sees anything that leads them to believe an infraction of the required personal conduct outline has been committed the person responsible may be dismissed for the rest of that days game/tournament.

**Article 3.** Fighting will lead to an immediate ejection for the remainder of the league/tournament, possible suspension or even a lifetime exclusion.

**Article 4.** Alcohol, other intoxicants, weapons, drones and pets are prohibited on our permitted fields.

### **SECTION 3. REQUIRED TEAM CONDUCT**

**Article 1.** For the safety of our officials and their ability to administer the game all team personnel must remain at least two yards off the sidelines and inside the designated team boxes, if provided.

**Article 2.** Coaches may signal or call-in plays during the play clock but must be out-of-bounds before the snap. Coaches on the field-of-play during game play will be assessed a timeout.

**Article 3.** After all touchdowns and successful PAT attempts, the ball carrier must report to an official who will ensure the flag was not tampered with by pulling the flag from the ball carrier.

**Article 4.** Teams are required to position themselves on an opposite sideline from the opponent. A team occupying a sideline during a previous game with a back to back game on the same field will have priority on the same sideline until they no longer have a game scheduled there.

**Article 5.** If teams cannot agree on a sideline to occupy the Referee will conduct a coin toss and assign sidelines.

**Article 6.** Officials may require that boom-boxes or other noise producing devices be turned off or eliminated as they interfere with the game official's ability to communicate and administer the game.

**Article 7.** Teams are required to clean up their garbage after contests.

### **SECTION 4. ROSTER RULES**

**Article 1.** Rosters must be completed through the registration system or in person on paper before your first game on an official roster sheet. Team captains must invite players by entering their email address or sending them the invite link. Players must accept the invite, register themselves and accept the waiver in order to be eligible to participate.

**Article 2.** If the team captain is also playing, they must register themselves as a player on the roster and accept the waiver. If the team captain is not playing, their spot on the roster does not count toward the roster maximum.

**Article 3.** Failure to complete your roster will result in a forfeit if protested and removal from the event without refund.

**Article 4.** Players are not eligible to be on a roster for more than one team in each format (i.e. 4v4 Non-Contact, etc) including lower skill divisions (Pro, Comp, Rec, etc). If a player is found to be on multiple rosters, only their PRO roster would be deemed legal, and if on multiple PRO rosters, all rosters are deemed illegal. Age specific divisions are excluded, so you may play in one O35 or U24 division of the same style.

**Article 5.** Transgender players may play on the team that matches the gender on their state or federal issued identification document.

**Article 6.** Players must have a valid I.D. or copy of their I.D. with them at all times. In the event of a Roster Protest this is the only form accepted as proof of identity.

**Article 7.** The number of players that can be on a team's roster varies by style. See individual style rules for details.

## **SECTION 5. PLAYOFFS**

**Article 1.** During tournament play the number of teams that advance to playoff rounds will be determined by the number of teams in each bracket.

## **SECTION 6. THUNDER AND LIGHTNING PROTOCOL**

**Article 1.** Practice and competitions will be suspended immediately when lightning is detected within 10 miles. All athletes and spectators should seek safe shelter during severe weather (but not under trees). Play shall not resume for at least 30 minutes after the last sight of lightning or sound of a thunderclap. Three long blasts from an air horn, car horn, or whistle will be the signal it is safe to continue play.

# **RULE 2: UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT**

## **SECTION 1. SAFETY**

**Article 1.** Players may not wear hard, unyielding, or stiff material items that in the view of the officiating crew may present a hazard to other players.

**Article 2.** It is mandatory that all players wear a protective mouthpiece while on the field-of-play.

**Article 3.** Players must wear pants or shorts that do not have pockets, belt loops, zippers, or exposed draw strings. Pants or shorts with pockets that have been professionally sewn-shut are allowed at the game official's discretion. Pants or shorts cannot be tapped or turned inside out unless the shorts are double lined.

## **SECTION 2. FLAG BELTS**

**Article 1.** Teams must supply their own flags. The specific type for each style and event will be communicated on the USA Flag event landing page.

**Article 2.** Bring extra flags and belts, event organizers may not have flags for sale and have no means in which to replace or repair damaged flags. Your participation is subject to having the correct and working flags.

**Article 3.** Having the correct and legal flags is solely the responsibility of the participant. If you are not certain if your flags are legal or allowed, it is your duty to confirm with the officials or director prior to game start to avoid consequences of illegal equipment.

**Article 4.** Altered or tampered flags could result in an ejection or forfeit. No shortening, cutting, using a cloth material or other substrate different from the traditional vinyl material (at the discretion of the officials and director), etc.

**Article 5.** Youth size flags may not be worn in adult leagues. Adult flags must be no less than 14" long as measured from the bottom of the popper or flag belt when there is no popper present and no less than 1 ¾" wide. (Failure to Wear Proper Equipment – 5-yards, loss of down)

**Article 6.** Flags must be a contrasting color to a player's pants/shorts. Contrasting is at the official's discretion.

**Article 7.** Flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding. Flags must be evenly distributed on the belt. Suction cups must face down and away from the body. Belts must be snug around the waist to avoid rotating.

**Article 8.** If a player chooses to wear a hand towel, or any other object, on their waist it will be treated as part of the flag belt.

**Article 9.** If a ball carrier starts the play wearing an incomplete, improperly worn, or improperly secured flag belt, or no flag belt at all, they may not advance the ball after taking possession of it and will be ruled down where they took possession of the ball. For example: They may catch a pass but not advance it.

**Article 10.** The person taking the snap is an exception to this rule, they may take the snap and advance the ball or otherwise participate in a play and will be downed by one-hand touch.

**Article 11.** If a player is legally or illegally deflagged during a play and then comes into possession of the football later during the same play, they must be downed by one-hand touch.

**Article 11.** All players on the field are eligible receivers at the snap regardless of possible uniform violations.

**Article 12.** A missing flag violation will not delay the game or stop a live play.

### **SECTION 3. MISCELLANEOUS UNIFORM AND GEAR ISSUES**

**Article 1.** Some type of team jersey is required; the minimal standard is similar-colored shirts. Teams must carry two colored shirts, a dark color and a light color. They do not have to be official uniforms, the light colored one can be a white T-shirt. If both teams are wearing the same color, there will be a coin toss, and the losing team will need to change into a different color.

**Article 2.** Players must ensure their jerseys are long enough to remain tucked in during the entire play or short enough so there is a minimum of 4" from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline. (Jerseys should never cover the flag belt).

**Article 3.** When a shirt is untucked at the snap a hold will not be called on the defender that is making a fair and legal attempt at the ball carrier's flag. It is the player's responsibility to check their equipment before each snap.

**Article 4.** Footballs must be pebble grained leather or rubber covered and meet the recommendations of size and shape for a regulation football. Adult men's teams must use a regulation size ball. Adult women's teams may use a regulation, intermediate or junior size ball.

**Article 5.** Players must wear close-toed shoes. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed.

**Article 6.** Players may wear eye protection to include prescription glasses or flexible sunglasses.

**Article 7.** Players may wear a face shield molded to the face with no protrusions to protect against facial injury.

**Article 8.** Jewelry that in the judgement of a game official might endanger other players must be removed before play.

**Article 9.** Player's fingernails must be trimmed or taped over to protect opponents. Alternatively, players may wear gloves to protect their opponents.

**Article 10.** Players may wear knit or stocking-style caps. Hard-billed caps must be removed or turned around backward. Players may wear a headband made of non-abrasive material. Rubber or elastic bands may be used in hair. Soft-shelled helmets designed for flag football players may be worn.

**Article 11.** Players may tape forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear soft gloves, elbow pads, shin guards, and knee pads. Unyielding items such as braces, casts, or anything with exposed metal are not allowed. Anything in question will be discussed with league officials.

**Article 12.** Officials will endeavor to identify missing, incomplete, or improperly worn flag belts prior to the snap and announce for example "number X, down on possession". The player with the missing flag violation must fix the issue during the next dead ball situation or leave the field until they have done so.

## **RULE 3: CLOCK MECHANICS**

(Length of games and stop-clock procedures vary by style)

### **SECTION 1. GENERAL TIMING PROCEDURES**

**Article 1.** Game time is forfeit time. To avoid a forfeit, teams may use team timeouts to 'buy' time.

**Article 2.** Time outs are 30-seconds.

**Article 3.** The offense has a 25-second play clock to snap the ball before a delay of game penalty is assessed.

**Article 4.** Length of games and stop-clock procedure vary by style, please refer to individual style rules books. When officials go to the 'stop clock' mechanic the clock will stop / start as listed below:

- Defense gains possession of the ball: on the following snap unless it is a PAT attempt.
- Either side is awarded a first down after a punt / on the snap
- Inadvertent whistle / at the ready
- Incomplete passes / on the snap
- Intentional grounding / at the ready
- Offense achieves a first down / clocks stops till referee whistles the ready to play whistle.
- Out-of-bounds plays with a player in possession of the ball / on the snap

- Intentional loose ball initiated beyond the line of scrimmage that goes out-of-bounds / on the ready (judgement call)
- Penalty administration (other than Delay of Game) / depends on previous play.
- Delay of game / on the snap
- Referee timeout / at the Referee's discretion
- Safety / when the receiving team take possession of the ball to attempt a return.
- Team timeout / on the snap
- Injury / when player is removed from field (depending on the status of clock on previous play)
- Touchback / on the snap
- Touchdown / on the next snap after the PAT attempt. PATs are untimed downs during 'stop/pro clock mechanics.
- Onside Plays are untimed downs.

## SECTION 2. TIME OUTS AND CLOCK PROTOCOL

**Article 1.** Officials may stop the clock as needed.

**Article 2.** Team timeouts are 30 seconds. After 30 seconds the official will audibly place the offense on a 25-second play clock. Timeouts do not roll over from the first half.

**Article 3.** Halftime is two minutes.

**Article 4.** Team captains are encouraged to yell "clock?" or "clock check?" in lieu of "time?" to avoid confusion when requesting a team timeout.

**Article 5.** Event directors may enter the field of play during any dead ball situation to address matters they believe should not wait till half-time or the end of the game by calling a 'Director's time-out'.

# RULE 4: COIN TOSS

## SECTION 1. COIN TOSS

**Article 1.** Team captains are required to bring their game ball(s) to the coin toss for inspection.

**Article 2.** Game officials will confirm with team captains during the coin toss that the teams are in correct and legal uniforms (pockets, flags, contrasting colors, unyielding materials, etc.).

**Article 3.** Referee will issue the first warning about unsportsmanlike conduct, excessive rough play, and language.

**Article 4.** During tournament play "Home" or "Away" will be determined using either a strength of play record ("seeding") or randomly ("draft-style").

**Article 5.** First possession is decided using a coin toss. The head official will ask the 'calling captain' their choice of "heads" or "tails". The official will ask the opposing team to repeat and confirm the choice before flipping the coin. The head official will then confirm the call. The captain winning the toss shall choose one of the following options:

- Begin on offense
- Begin on defense
- Designate which goal their team will defend
- Defer their choice to the second half

**Article 6.** The loser of the coin toss shall make a choice of the remaining options. Before the start of the second half, the choice of options shall be reversed. If a team captain does not attend the coin toss, the opposing team will win the toss.

**Article 7.** In order to keep to schedule, the game clock shall start one minute after the coin toss formalities have concluded, regardless if the teams have taken the field or not.

## **RULE 5: CHALLENGE PROCEDURE**

### **SECTION 1. RULE CHALLENGES**

**Article 1.** Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Generally, officials are happy to answer quick response and general questions during the game if they do not impede the game. The priority is to spot the ball then address questions without impeding the play clock.

**Article 2.** If a captain or head coach believes an official has made a procedural error, they may call for a timeout. If the head official agrees that there has been a procedural error (e.g., wrong down, incorrect penalty yardage, etc.) the procedural error will be addressed, and the timeout will not be charged. The challenge must be made to an official before the next snap.

**Article 3.** In the event the captain or head coach loses a procedural challenge and the captain's team did not possess a legal team timeout a fifteen-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed.

**Article 4.** Only procedural issues may be addressed, not an official's judgment call or no-call.

**Article 5.** If the protesting team is unsatisfied with the ruling of the challenge on the field and would like to elevate the challenge to a league director / head of officials, they may do so.

**Article 6.** If the protest is ultimately lost, the protesting team will lose all remaining timeouts of that half. If the protesting team does not have any timeouts left in the half, they will lose all of the timeouts in the following half.

**Article 7.** If the team doesn't possess any timeouts at all they will be assessed an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

### **SECTION 2. ROSTER CHALLENGES**

**Article 1.** To protest a roster, a team captain must specifically request a protest from the officials and select one individual player to challenge. This must occur while the game is in play.

**Article 2.** Challenges will be examined and fully enforced first before another, or cross-protest can be issued.

**Article 3.** During tournament play if a player is found playing on a team illegally, the team will immediately forfeit the game the illegal player participated in. They are not allowed to protest back at that time because the game is no longer in play.

**Article 4.** If the protest is lost, the protesting team will lose all remaining timeouts of that half. If the protesting team does not have any timeouts left in the half they will lose

all of the timeouts in the following half. In the event the captain or head coach loses a procedural challenge and the captain's team did not possess a legal team timeout a fifteen-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed.

## **RULE 6: OFFENSE**

### **SECTION 1. GENERAL OFFENSE**

**Article 1.** Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless they are the only player in motion.

**Article 2.** For specific divisions, no offensive player may begin a play closer than five yards from a sideline unless they were momentarily at least 9-yards from a sideline (this is sometimes referred to as "inside the numbers" or "checking in"). 3) All players must substitute from their sideline only. This allows the defense to be aware of their presence and avoids deceptive plays by the offense.

**Article 3.** The ball must be snapped between the center's legs.

**Article 4.** It is a false start if any player on offense enters the neutral zone before the snap.

**Article 5.** The offense may not act or move in a manner that, in the judgement of the covering official, is clearly intended to cause the defense to encroach. Verbalizing play-calls or snap counts alone are not acts or moves that should be considered unless they are in conjunction with other acts or moves. The speed, abruptness, down and distance and if any player pretends to have the ball or otherwise simulate action at the snap will be considerations.

**Article 6.** Direct snaps are legal to any player not on the line-of-scrimmage.

**Article 7.** The ball will be declared dead if any portion of the ball carrier's body other than their hands and feet (knee, elbow, buttocks, ball-in-hand, etc.) touches the ground.

**Article 8.** The offense is responsible for retrieving the ball and returning it an official or to the line of scrimmage at the end of each play.

### **SECTION 2. FUMBLES AND MUFFS**

**Article 1.** Fumbles are a "dead ball" when they hit the ground. If a lateral, muffed or fumbled ball is intercepted before becoming dead it remains a "live ball".

**Article 2.** Forward fumbles that hit the ground will be marked where the ball carrier's feet were when he/she lost control and not the spot where the ball hit the ground.

**Article 3.** Muffed snaps will be marked where the ball hit the ground.

### **SECTION 3. RUNNING / JUMPING / DIVING**

**Article 1.** Ball carriers are allowed to leave their feet, jump, and spin as evasive maneuvers to advance the ball as long as they do not put another player's safety at risk. Not every insignificant jump or small hop constitutes a safety issue and player safety risk is at the discretion of each official. Jump cuts or leaping between two defenders is allowed if they do not initiate noteworthy contact with the defender or put another player's safety at risk.



**Article 2.** Ball carriers may not hurdle over another player. Ball carriers may not dive, lunge, or fall forward in a perceived intentional manner in order to advance the ball or achieve a line-to-gain. This is a judgment call by the game officials.

**Article 3.** Ball carriers may extend the ball out in front of them to gain additional yardage.

**Article 4.** Diving by the defense to capture a ball carrier's flag is legal.

**Article 5.** Ball carriers must make every effort to avoid a defender who has established a stationary position.

**Article 6.** Runners may leave their feet to avoid collision or falling on another player.

**Article 7.** Passers may jump vertically to throw the ball over a defender.

**Article 8.** The offense may use multiple backward hand-offs or laterals.

#### **SECTION 4. FLAG GUARDING INCLUDING STIFF-ARMING**

**Article 1.** The ball carrier's flags must be accessible to the defense throughout the play. Flags may not be tucked in pants, tucked under jerseys, worn improperly, looped around the waist belt, or knotted.

**Article 2.** Flag guarding is the act of a ball carrier denying a defender the opportunity to capture their flag in any physical way. The ball carrier shall not flag guard by flailing of arms, using their hands, arms, elbows or extremely dipped shoulders to deny the opportunity of an opponent to remove a flag.

**Article 3.** The ball carrier may not swat a defender's hands away nor pin the flag against their body using the ball or hands. An official may call flag guarding if they feel that a ball carrier's natural running motion gave the ball carrier a decisive advantage over the defender and the running motion caused part of the ball carrier's body to block a de-flagging attempt.

**Article 4.** What constitutes flag guarding is up to the official's judgment. We recommend you carry the ball with your hands held high on the body to avoid flag guarding. This is one of the most difficult transitions for traditional football players. Flag guarding shall not be called if there is no defensive player within reasonable distance to capture the flag.

**Article 5.** The ball carrier may bend at the knees to dip low, side cut, skip, or take short hops. Extreme low dips (sometimes called a "duck-walk") are legal and do not constitute flag guarding in themselves, as long as the flag carrier's flags are still exposed and the defensive player isn't physically impeded (i.e. the ball carrier isn't using his arms, hands, shoulder, ball, etc. to impede the defender. Normally flag guarding can be avoided while "duck-walking" when the ball carrier keeps his hands and elbows high on the body (ex: at shoulder-level). Examples of flag guarding:

- stiff arming
- pinning the flag
- swatting
- using the ball as a stiff arm

**Article 6.** No penalty will be called if a ball carrier simultaneously flag guards as the defender pulls the flag.

**Article 7.** Tampering with the flag in any way to gain advantage is illegal.

## **SECTION 5. PASS PLAYS**

**Article 1.** Only one forward pass per play. Once the ball has passed the line-of-scrimmage it cannot be returned to behind the line-of-scrimmage and thrown forward legally.

**Article 2.** If any portion of the passer's body is behind the line-of-scrimmage it is a legal pass.

**Article 3.** All players are eligible to receive a pass unless they have stepped out-of-bounds of their own accord. Players may re-establish themselves in the field of play and catch the ball if another player has touched the ball first.

**Article 4.** Any offensive player who receives either a forward or backward handoff behind scrimmage can pass the ball from behind the line-of-scrimmage.

**Article 5.** Backward passes are allowed.

**Article 6.** If the passer's flag has been pulled while the passer still has the ball in their hand, it is a sack. There is no allowance given for the passer's arm being in motion at the time of the sack. Ball in hand at all equals a sack.

## **SECTION 6. INTENTIONAL GROUNDING**

*\*Intentional grounding does not apply to 4v4 or 5v5 Non-Contact where intentional grounding is allowed.*

**Article 1.** A passer may not throw the ball into the ground to avoid a loss of yardage or conserve time.

**Article 2.** An exception to this rule is it is legal to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball to the ground immediately (spiking) after receiving either a direct hand-to-hand snap or from the "shot-gun" formation for styles that do not allow hand-to-hand snaps. The spike must be fluid and immediate after the snap or it is intentional grounding.

**Article 3.** A pass may not be intentionally thrown into an area not occupied by an offensive receiver.

**Article 4.** Passers may not throw the ball out-of-bounds to stop the clock as in NFL or NCAA games.

**Article 5.** Intentional grounding can occur anywhere behind the line of scrimmage.

## **SECTION 7. CATCHES**

**Article 1.** A pass is completed when an offensive player simultaneously places at least one foot inbounds and momentarily maintains possession of the ball.

**Article 2.** Simultaneous catches between a defensive and offensive player go to the offense.

**Article 3.** In the event of a bobbled catch, i.e., the ball is batted about by the receiver in an attempt to catch it, and the intended receiver is de-flagged before taking full possession there is no penalty for early flag pull.

**Article 4.** Whether or not a ball is tipped or touched in the air has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls anywhere on the field (roughing, personal fouls, illegal contact, etc.).

**Article 5.** If a receiver steps out-of-bounds of their own accord and is the first to touch a pass, it is illegal touching. The play will be allowed to continue to a dead ball situation (5-yards from previous and a loss of down, if accepted).

**Article 6.** If the ball comes out of the receiver's grasp due to contact with the ground or while going to the ground the pass is incomplete.

## **RULE 7: DEFENSE**

### **SECTION 1. GENERAL DEFENSE**

**Article 1.** Stripping or attempting to strip the ball from a player's hand, including the quarterback, is illegal.

**Article 2.** Defensive teams may not simulate the offensive team's signals or cadence. (Unsportsmanlike)

**Article 3.** There are no "free plays" for the offense. After the head official blows the ready-for-play whistle and the snapper puts their hand(s) on the ball, no player may enter the neutral zone until the ball is moved to start the snap. Entering the neutral zone before the snap is known as "offside" or encroachment which causes the play to be immediately blown dead and the offending team is penalized five yards.

**Article 4.** If a defensive team intentionally commits a penalty in order to achieve a specific goal and the penalty is declined, any subsequent attempts to continue committing the penalty will result in a 15 yard unsportsmanlike penalty and automatic first down for the offense.

Example: Offense has the ball 2nd down and 3 yards to gain prior to a first down. Defense intentionally jumps offsides to try and get offense to accept a first down and long line to gain. If offense declines, and defense immediately attempts same penalty again, an additional unsportsmanlike penalty will be enforced.

**Article 5.** A player that is not at the legal distance to rush in applicable styles, without entering the neutral zone, is allowed to "reset" to the appropriate distance during a live ball and become an eligible rusher.

### **SECTION 2. ROUGHING**

**Article 1.** Defensive players must make a concerted effort to avoid charging into the quarterback.

**Article 2.** In general, defensive players may not "crash" the quarterback's throwing arm, shoulder or body even if the ball is touched first. This rule applies to holders and kickers as well.

**Article 3.** It is a quarterbacks right to step into a throw, and the rushers duty to avoid contact. If contact is significant and forceful at the discretion of the officials, whether attempting to go for the flag or not, it may be deemed roughing the passer.

**Article 4.** An insignificant "brush-by" may be allowed by the referee but is not guaranteed.

**Article 5.** Making contact with the quarterback while blocking a pass or attempting to block a pass may result in a roughing the passer penalty.

**Article 6.** Whether or not a ball is tipped in the air has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls (roughing, personal fouls, etc.).

**Article 7.** A roughing penalty will not be enforced if a quarterback initiates contact with a defensive player while in the throwing motion; for example, during the passer's follow through the player's arm makes contact with an opponent's hand, arm, or shoulder. In this instance the impetus of the contact is the action of the quarterback and not the defender. This is a judgment call.

#### **SECTION 4. FLAG PULLING MECHANICS**

**Article 1.** Flag football is a finesse game versus the brute strength game of traditional tackle football.

**Article 2.** Flag pulling is the legal removal of a flag from an opponent in possession of the ball. Legal flag pulls must begin with the hands leading toward the opponent's hips and flags.

**Article 3.** No player shall make any contact with an opponent which is deemed unnecessary or excessive and which incites roughness. (This is a judgement call IAW NFHS rule 9-4-3g, Illegal Personal Contact)

**Article 4.** No player has the right to over-aggressively 'body up', 'wrap up', 'play through', 'bull rush', charge, spear or lead with a shoulder against an opponent even to capture a flag. Players must play to capture the flag, not to commit Illegal Personal Contact.

**Article 5.** Pushing out on the sidelines is not permitted unless the defense was making a fair, legal, and reasonable attempt to pull the ball carrier's flags, i.e. the defender's hands were aimed low at the ball carrier's hips and flags and not high up on the body.

**Article 6.** Pushing, striking, holding, slapping or tripping while attempting to pull a flag is not permitted.

**Article 7.** A defensive player may not pull the flag of a player who is not in possession of the ball.

**Article 8.** Any defensive player who removes the flag from an offensive ball carrier is encouraged to show good sportsmanship and hold the flag above their head to assist the officials in locating the spot where the capture occurred.

**Article 9.** Players may be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct for throwing, spiking, obscuring, or delaying the ball carrier in recovering their pulled flag.

**Article 10.** If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play the de-flagging reverts to a one-hand touch of the runner between the shoulder and the knees.

**Article 11.** When a ball carrier flag guards and a defensive player pulls the ball carrier's flag simultaneously, no penalty will be called for flag guarding.

**Article 12.** If a defensive player physically contains, tackles, or attempts to tackle the ball carrier (e.g., bear hugs, holds, wrestles with, obstructs, pushes the ball carrier out-of-bounds, tackles, or attempts to tackle, etc.) without making a clear, legal attempt to pull the ball carrier's flag, the offensive team will be awarded at least one line-zone-to-gain or fifteen-yards (offended team's choice) from the spot of foul and an automatic first down.

**Article 13.** This type of action can result in a score awarded if the foul occurred inside the final line-zone-to-gain or the covering official reasonably believes the foul is the only thing that prevented the ball carrier from scoring. (Teaching point: Play the flag not the ball carrier's body or ball as in traditional tackle football).

## **SECTION 4. PASS COVERAGE**

**Article 1.** Pass interference normally occurs above the waist; entangled feet are not considered pass interference. Incidental contact is not considered pass interference.

**Article 2.** A player may "find" their opponent by reaching out and placing a hand on him/her as long as touching does not delay or impede him/her. This is not considered pass interference.

**Article 3.** Contact away from the direction of the pass is not considered pass interference. Examples of pass interference include:

- Shoving or pushing off to create separation.
- Playing through the back.
- Hook and turn: grabbing the torso and turning an opponent before the pass arrives.
- Not playing the ball: the defender is looking at the receiver and contact materially impedes the receiver.
- Arm bars, hooking, restricting, grabbing wrists, or turning a receiver.
- Blocking downfield before the ball has been touched, commonly seen through "pick plays".
- Cutting off the path of a receiver by being in front of them and slowing down or being beside them and "riding" them off their path to the ball.

**Article 4.** Whether a pass is catchable or uncatchable has no bearing on pass interference.

**Article 5.** A player may use their arms or hands to intentionally obstruct the receiver's view (face guarding) of the ball without turning their own head to play the ball as long as contact is not made with the receiver.

## **SECTION 5. INTERCEPTIONS**

**Article 1.** Interceptions may be returned. In the event of an interception, the intercepting team must secure the ball with "clean hands," i.e., they must not have committed a foul before or simultaneous to the interception.

**Article 2.** If the intercepting team gained the interception with "clean hands" they will be awarded a first down where the ball becomes dead (flag pull, stepping out-of-bounds, fumbled, etc.)

**Article 3.** The ball will be spotted wherever the ball was at the time of the flag pull, or the ball carrier left the field-of-play.

**Article 4.** Fouls by the intercepting team after an interception will be assessed from the spot of the foul. Fouls by the intercepted team after the interception will be assessed at the end of the run.

# **RULE 8: SCORING**

## **SECTION 1. POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN (PAT)**

**Article 1.** Following a touchdown, once the scoring team has informed an official of which point conversion choice, they want to attempt the decision cannot be changed unless the scoring team uses a team timeout.

**Article 2.** If a penalty occurs during an extra point attempt, the penalty will be assessed but the extra point value remains the same.

**Article 3.** Decisions cannot be changed after a penalty. For example, if the offense attempts a 1-point PAT and is penalized five yards for a false start, they cannot change their mind and go for a 2-point PAT.

**Article 4.** Unsportsmanlike conduct and personal fouls during successful touchdown attempts will be assessed at half the distance to the goal during the PAT attempt (e.g., 2-point PAT attempts will be spotted at the 5-yard line and 1-point attempts at the 2 ½-yard line) or on the kickoff. All other defensive penalties may be declined by the offense and the score will stand.

**Article 5.** Dead ball fouls committed by the offense that do not carry a loss-of-down penalty (false start, offside, etc.) will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.

**Article 6.** Fouls by the offense during a PAT attempt that carry a loss-of-down penalty (flag guarding, illegal advancement, illegal forward pass, etc.) will result in the PAT being “no good” and the attempt will not be repeated.

**Article 7.** Fouls committed by the offense in unsuccessful PAT attempts will be declined by the defense and the PAT will be “no good” and will not be replayed.

**Article 8.** Fouls simultaneous to the snap (illegal shift, illegal motion, illegal formation, etc.), if accepted, will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.

**Article 9.** Fouls by the defense during an unsuccessful PAT attempt will result in a retry after the options are administered. The offense may opt to accept or decline penalty yardage before the retry.

**Article 10.** Interceptions on any PAT can be returned by the defense for two points regardless of PAT point attempted.

**Article 11.** If multiple changes of possession occur on a PAT, resulting in the original offensive team scoring, they will be awarded points based on the original attempt. i.e. 1 point if they were originally going for 1, or 2 if they were going for 2, etc.

## **SECTION 2. SAFETIES**

**Article 1.** Terminologies and Designations – Team A is the team that initiates the snap. Team B is the opponent that began the play on defense. Safeties occur when the ball becomes dead in the offense’s (Team A’s) end zone or Team A commits a foul in their end zone. The team’s End Zone is the one it is defending. The goal line is IN the End Zone.

Examples include:

- Grounded fumbles in or out of Team A’s end zone (sidelines and end line).
- A player in possession of the ball has their flag pulled in the end zone (except after a change-of-possession).
- The ball carrier going out-of-bounds behind the goal line (except after a change-of-possession).
- The ball is snapped out of the end zone.

## **Article 2. Team B Exceptions:**

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

# **RULE 9: OVERTIME**

## **SECTION 1. GENERAL PROCEDURES**

**Article 1.** Only one coin toss is allowed during overtime regardless of the number of overtime periods played.

**Article 2.** If additional overtimes are played, the captains will alternate choices (for example: the winner of the overtime coin toss chooses defense. If there is another overtime period the loser of the overtime coin toss now gets to choose).

**Article 3.** For winning the coin toss, a team may choose offense, defense, or direction the overtime periods will be played.

**Article 4.** Refer to individual styles rule books specifics for overtime details.

**Article 5.** Kicking for points in overtime is allowed at the 8v8 Contact formats if goal posts are available.

**Article 6.** Each team is allowed one timeout per each overtime period.

**Article 7.** Interceptions are returnable in overtime for two points in extra point shootouts.

**Article 8.** Overtime penalties will be assessed as during the regular game. Styles of play that enforce penalties differently in the last 2 minutes do not apply in overtime.

**Article 9.** The goal line shall always be the line-to-gain in overtime, regardless of the number of overtimes played.

# **RULE 10: OFFICIATING**

## **SECTION 1. GENERAL OFFICIATING**

**Article 1.** Officials do not have to call everything they see but they must completely see everything they call.

**Article 2.** Game officials may not use any recording or replay in making any decision relating to the game.

**Article 3.** Officials must not tolerate taunting, baiting, and unsportsmanlike acts.

**Article 4.** Game official must err on the side of safety while officiating.

## **SECTION 2. ENDING THE GAME / FORFEITS**

**Article 1.** The game may not end with a penalty unless it is declined.

**Article 2.** Penalties by the offense that include a loss of down with time expired in either half (i.e., there is no time on the clock) will not extend the half or game.

**Article 3.** Offsetting penalties will not extend the half or game.

**Article 4.** Forfeits that occur prior to game will be recorded as 28-0 for 4v4 and 5v5 games and 17-0 for 7/8/9 player formats. Forfeits that occur during the game will be recorded at these scores or the actual score of the game at the time of the forfeit, whichever is the larger differential.

**Article 5.** A forfeit will not be official until expressly issued by a director only and deemed final.

**Article 6.** Teams and players participating in multiple styles that are not guaranteed to be scheduled separately, or in the same schedule block, are required to have enough players to participate to avoid a forfeit and no rescheduling or holding the game up will be administered.

**Article 7.** It is each team's responsibility to have enough players present at the coinflip to avoid a forfeit, even in the event of other divisions or fields running behind. The only time a game will be held up officially is when those styles have specifically been guaranteed not to overlap as detailed on the event page. If you are not certain if your teams' games will overlap, make sure to double check prior to schedules being released.

**Article 8.** No period or half can end if there is an obvious timing error, or any other irregularity has occurred and verified.

**Article 9.** Four unsportsmanlike and / or personal fouls by one team will result in a forfeiture.

## **SECTION 3. PREVENTATIVE OFFICIATING**

**Article 1.** Officials should aim to assist teams to avoid penalties (preventative officiating). Cautions and teaching points are appropriate most times.\

**Article 2.** It is not the mission of the game officials to flag every small, nuanced infraction of traditional high-level football unless it produces a significant unfair advantage.

Preventative officiating examples include:

- Warning players about unsportsmanlike conduct during the coin toss
- Reminding coaches and players how the clock works
- Clarifying rules
- Tell the quarterback to "wait for my whistle."
- Give players warnings when appropriate.
- Remind players on the line to "check with me / look at me" to help them line up correctly.
- Announcing "10 seconds to snap, please" and counting down: five, four, three, etc.
- Announcing "balls away" to let the defensive players know they can stop pursuing the passer.
- Yelling 'forward' or 'back' while observing a pass to leave no doubt what you saw.
- Keeping sidelines clear of players and coaches etc.



**Article 3.** Prior to a snap, officials can require and warn players to adjust their flags to their proper alignment. Repeated warnings of this nature can result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.

#### **SECTION 4. MECHANICS OF OFFICIATING**

**Article 1.** No penalty or penalty flag stops a live play.

**Article 2.** Be 'game-aware' of where you should be to make your best call.

**Article 3.** Officiating is a team sport. Keep regular eye-contact with fellow officials and mimic their commands and hand signals.

**Article 4.** Remember to 'dead ball' officiate. Just because the play is over doesn't mean you don't have to pay attention.

**Article 5.** Officials must highly endeavor to announce down and distance before any snap. While it always the team coach's responsibility to be game aware, the officiating crew should always endeavor to keep them informed.

**Article 6.** Resist the temptation to watch the ball in the air, no foul has ever occurred up there. Watch your players.

**Article 7.** Resist the temptation of running with the whistle in your mouth to avoid inadvertent whistles.

**Article 8.** Use short-underhand tosses to avoid hitting players with the ball when relaying the ball to a game official.

**Article 9.** Officials should throw their hat to the ground when they see a player step out-of-bounds.

**Article 10.** All officials will respect the calls of other officials. However, it is purely acceptable for an official to 'come over the top' of another official if the official had a better angle or saw something the other did not.

**Article 11.** To be convincing and 'sell' your calls: use strong whistle and flag mechanics, clear and crisp signals and a strong and clear voice.

**Article 12.** In the interest of safety do not attempt to throw your penalty flag to the exact spot of the foul when you may inadvertently hit a player with the thrown flag. Throw it somewhere parallel to the spot of the foul.

#### **SECTION 5. MARKING THE SPOT**

**Article 1.** The ball will be spotted wherever the ball was at the time of the flag pull, or the ball carrier left the field-of-play.

**Article 2.** A ball spotter / ball marker or line judge shall be used to mark the line-of-scrimmage.

**Article 3.** When a ball carrier's flag accidentally falls off — but not because of any action by the defense — that player will be downed by one-hand touch.

**Article 4.** Flag guarding is notionally and effectively the end of the play. However, the play will be allowed to come to its natural dead-ball situation without the whistle being blown.

**Article 5.** If a defensive player initiates, contact with a ball carrier while making an attempt to capture the ball carrier's flag and that force causes the ball carrier backward

prior to the flag being captured 'forward progress' will be awarded as long as the ball carrier does not make a move under their own power to continue the play.

**Article 6.** If the ball is intercepted in the end zone and intercepting team fouls in the end zone prior to the ball being brought back into the field (example: flag guarding) the result of the play will be a touchback and the foul will be administered from the touchback spot. This will not result in a safety.

**Article 7.** If the entire ball is brought back into the field of play and then a foul occurs anywhere on the field, including the end zones, the penalty will be administered from the spot of the foul.

## **SECTION 6. PENALTY ENFORCEMENT**

**Article 1.** Penalties are assessed for live ball fouls in the order they occurred before dealing with dead ball fouls.

**Article 2.** Live ball and dead ball fouls do not offset one another.

**Article 3.** Officials may accept or decline penalties on a coach's behalf if they are obvious. However, the coach has the last word.

**Article 4.** There is no limit of how many dead ball fouls can be enforced.

**Article 5.** Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal when the yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

**Article 6.** Fouls simultaneous to the snap, if accepted, will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.

**Article 7.** An official shall have the authority to rectify an error and correct a down until the series has ended.

**Article 8.** Penalties associated with automatic first downs: An offended team may accept the automatic first down portion of a penalty but decline the yardage portion or they may accept both the yardage and the automatic first down.

**Article 9.** Yardage portions of any penalty may be declined.

**Article 10.** Disqualifications, Ejections and Unsportsmanlike Conduct are the only three penalties that cannot be declined.

**Article 11.** The loss-of-down aspect of a penalty has no significance following a change of possession or if the line to gain is reached after the enforcement.

## **SECTION 7. ESTABLISHING ZONE-LINE-TO-GAIN**

**Article 1.** For live ball fouls, the penalty yardage will be marked off first, then the next line-to-gain (first-down marker) will be established.

**Article 2.** On a change of possession, all live-ball penalties will be administered prior to determining the next line-to-gain. Once that line is established all dead ball penalties will be administered.

**Article 3.** To determine if a first down was achieved on any given running or passing play, the official will mark off any un-administered live-ball penalty yards before making the determination.

**Article 4.** If a penalty awards an automatic first down (e.g., roughing the passer) and the original line-to-gain was not achieved after the yardage was resolved, the original line-to-gain will remain in effect.

## **SECTION 8. PACE OF PLAY**

**Article 1.** Officials will hustle but not hurry. They must control the game and not let an anxious team set the pace. Please keep a consistent and brisk pace throughout the game to ensure teams get the maximum amount of playing time possible.

**Article 2.** If a snap occurs before the officials are ready, ready-to-play whistle or announcement, the ball will be blown dead and the quarterback issued a warning for the first offense. For the second offense a Delay-of-Game penalty will be earned.

**Article 3.** Officials may stop the clock as they see fit in order to administer a fair, controlled contest.

**Article 4.** Offensive teams may not take advantage of defensive substitutions to run “quick snap” plays to catch defensive teams not ready.

## **SECTION 9. MOMENTUM RULE**

**Article 1.** If the ball is intercepted between the 5-yard line and the goal line and the player’s momentum takes them into the End Zone where the ball becomes dead in their possession or the intercepting team fouls in the end zone (example: flag guarding) the ball belongs to the intercepting team and the penalty will be assessed from the spot where it was intercepted. It is not a touchback. It is not a safety.

## **SECTION 10. CONTACT ABOVE THE SHOULDERS**

**Article 1.** Safe play is our utmost concern. Officials will penalize any noteworthy contact above the shoulders (head, neck, or face) between players, even if accidental.

## **SECTION 11. HOLDING**

**Article 1.** Holding is a judgement call. Officials will penalize any noteworthy hold that provides a significant unfair advantage. A simple tug or momentary grasp may not necessarily constitute holding. Holding is an attempt to gain a physical advantage by using hands or arms to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or restraining an opponent. Be aware defenders will be given the benefit of the doubt if the ball carrier’s shirt is untucked.

## **SECTION 12. ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT**

**Article 1.** No player may contact an opponent that is judged to be unnecessary or provokes rough-play or retaliation.

**Article 2.** In the judgement of the game official, when one player uses enough force to knock another to the ground by pulling, tripping, bear-hugging, charging, sweeping, flinging, shoving, ‘bodying-up’ etc. Whether or not the player goes to the ground is irrelevant.

**Article 3.** It is possible for a player(s) to go to the ground and it not be considered Illegal Contact, such as unintentional collision, i.e., the runner and defender meeting in the same

space during the play, when a defender is making a fair, safe and reasonable attempt to capture the ball carriers flag and the ball carrier is making a fair, safe and reasonable attempt to avoid the defender. Simply stated, two solid objects tried to occupy the same space at the same time.

**Article 4.** If a defender trips or compresses a ball carrier while pursuing the offensive player from the rear (typically seen in break-away plays), even if the defender is making a fair and reasonable attempt to capture the ball carrier's flag, the defender will be called for Illegal Contact. The defender is obliged to make a fair, SAFE and reasonable attempt.

**Article 5.** Safety is paramount.

**Article 6.** Incidental contact between opponents that does not grant either player an advantage should not be penalized.

### **SECTION 13. COOL DOWN PERIOD**

**Article 1.** Before, or instead of, disqualification or ejection an official may order (but is not required to) a player a "cool down" period if the official chooses.

**Article 2.** Players should think of this 'cool down' as a warning before being ejected and be thankful for it.

**Article 3.** This period will consist of five plays and will be tracked by the official that ordered the 'cool down'.

**Article 4.** The player must be off the field for five plays regardless. A score or other event does not release the player back to the field. They must stay off the field for five plays.

### **SECTION 14. DISQUALIFICATIONS AND EJECTIONS**

**Article 1.** Disqualifications, Ejections and Unsportsmanlike Conduct are the only three penalties that cannot be declined. They are completely the option of the game officials. The yardage portion of the penalty may be declined but infraction itself cannot.

**Article 2.** The difference between disqualification and ejection is completely the determination of the presiding referee and may not be appealed.

**Article 3.** Disqualifications are normally reserved to address lower-level transgressions.

**Article 4.** A disqualification will last for the remainder of the contest the player was disqualified for.

**Article 5.** A disqualified player may play in the next scheduled contest.

**Article 6.** An ejected player may not play in the next scheduled contest. They must sit out at least one additional game.

**Article 7.** Any official may disqualify a player.

**Article 8.** To eject a player all officials must agree, and it must be reported to the Style Director prior to play resuming.

**Article 9.** Ejections / disqualifications may occur for but are not limited to:

- A second unsportsmanlike or personal foul on a single player
- Any act deemed egregious by the head official
- Disrespectfully addressing or intentionally touching a game official
- Four unsportsmanlike and /or personal fouls by one team (forfeiture)
- Fighting of any kind, with punches thrown or landed, or involving yourself with a fight to escalate the situation without control.

## **SECTION 15. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT**

**Article 1.** Disrespect toward an official, coach, spectator or another player will constitute unsportsmanlike conduct.

**Article 2.** Players shall not 'showboat', taunt, spike the ball or flag belt toward an opponent, or be excessive in any way, to include using force against or verbally attack or harass another player.

**Article 3.** Celebrations are fine but keep them short, conservative, and not directed at an opponent.

**Article 4.** Use of inflammatory words or gestures is prohibited.

**Article 5.** If unsportsmanlike conduct occurs during a live play and the team did not score on that play, the penalty will be assessed from the new line-of-scrimmage, i.e., will be added to or subtracted from the end of the play.

## **SECTION 16. FIGHTING**

**Article 1.** Fighting will lead to immediate ejection, possible suspension, or lifetime exclusion.

**Article 2.** Fighting is any act or attempt to act by a player or non-player to strike or engage a player or non-player in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to, attempting to, or striking with the arms, hands, legs, feet, or foreign object whether or not there was contact.

**Article 3.** Any player who comes off the sideline to participate in a fight will be disqualified or ejected.

**Article 4.** If either team leaves the bench during a fight the game will be forfeited immediately.

## **SECTION 17. BENCH FOULS / WARNINGS**

**Article 1.** Teams may incur bench fouls for a variety of reasons to include but not limited to:

- Players or non-players interfering with play or an official
- Disrespect toward officials or other players or non-players
- Players or non-players in the designated restricted zone during a live play
- Non-players on the field of play
- Teams not remaining in the designated team box.
- Coaches on the field or becoming entangled in a live play.

## **SECTION 18. INADVERTENT WHISTLE**

**Article 1.** If an official blows an inadvertent whistle, they will declare the ball dead where the ball was at the time the inadvertent whistle. The team against which the action offended may have the option of accepting the play (i.e., the yards gained and the down advances) or replaying the down from the original line-of-scrimmage.

**Article 2.** If the ball was in the air when the inadvertent whistle occurred, it will be returned to the line-of-scrimmage and the down will be replayed.

**Article 3.** If a penalty marker is thrown prior to an inadvertent whistle, an accepted penalty will be administered as in any other play situation. When the foul is accepted, the inadvertent whistle is disregarded.

**Article 4.** When an inadvertent whistle is triggered by an unfair act, or an act used to deceive or confuse a game official the officiating crew may use their collective judgement to fairly adjudicate the situation. It may result in yardage awarded, a score granted, and/or the guilty player disqualified, etc. It is solely up to the officiating crew to decide.

## **SECTION 19. UNFAIR ACTS RULE**

**Article 1.** Neither team shall commit act(s) which, in the judgment of the game officials, tends to make a travesty of the game.

**Article 2.** The head official may enforce any penalty or remedy any situation with anything he/she considers equitable — including the award of a first down, a line-zone-to-gain, a replay, a score, forfeiture, removal of forfeiture or any administrative issue or situation or not covered specifically covered in these rules.

**Article 3.** If an ineligible player (ex: not on the roster, previously disqualified or previously ejected) is discovered by any means (ex: observation, challenge, etc.) participating in a live ball play that team will forfeit the game and the Unfair Act is assessed to the head coach.

## **SECTION 20. LAST PLAYER RULE AND PENALTY**

**Article 1.** If the last defensive player physically contains the ball carrier (e.g., bear hugs, flagrantly holds, pushes the ball carrier out-of-bounds above the hip, tackles, attempts to tackle, etc.) without making a clear, legal attempt to pull the ball carrier's flag or commits illegal contact, the offensive team will be awarded at least one line-zone-to-gain distance from the spot of foul and an automatic first down.

**Article 2.** In the spirit of the Unfair Acts Rule: Officials have the discretion to award a score if a flagrant foul occurred inside the final line-zone-to-gain or they reasonably believe a foul is the only thing that prevented the ball carrier from scoring. To evoke this rule, we require there must be total agreement of all game officials that saw the foul. (IAW Rule 9-9-5 NFHS).

## **SECTION 21. ESCALATION LADDER**

**Article 1.** The escalation ladder helps you determine an appropriate way of dealing with difficult situations. It is not a road map to be followed exactly, it doesn't have to be followed step-by-step. However, try to handle the situation at the lowest-level possible if appropriate.