

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

Flag Football Officials Training

April 13, 2026

Jeron Schmidt

Coordinator of Officials:

- Midwest Collegiate Women's Flag Football League
- Minnesota Girl's Flag Football League



Assigning Services:

- NFL Flag Regional Tournament
- Youth Leagues
- Regional Tournaments

On-Field Officiating:

- 2025 USA Football Jr. National Flag Football Team Development Camp
- MSHSL Tackle Football Official since 2010
 - Crew chief since 2021
 - State championship game in 2018
- NCAA DIII Official
 - MIAC League Championship Game 2022 and 2023
 - NCAA Playoffs in 2022

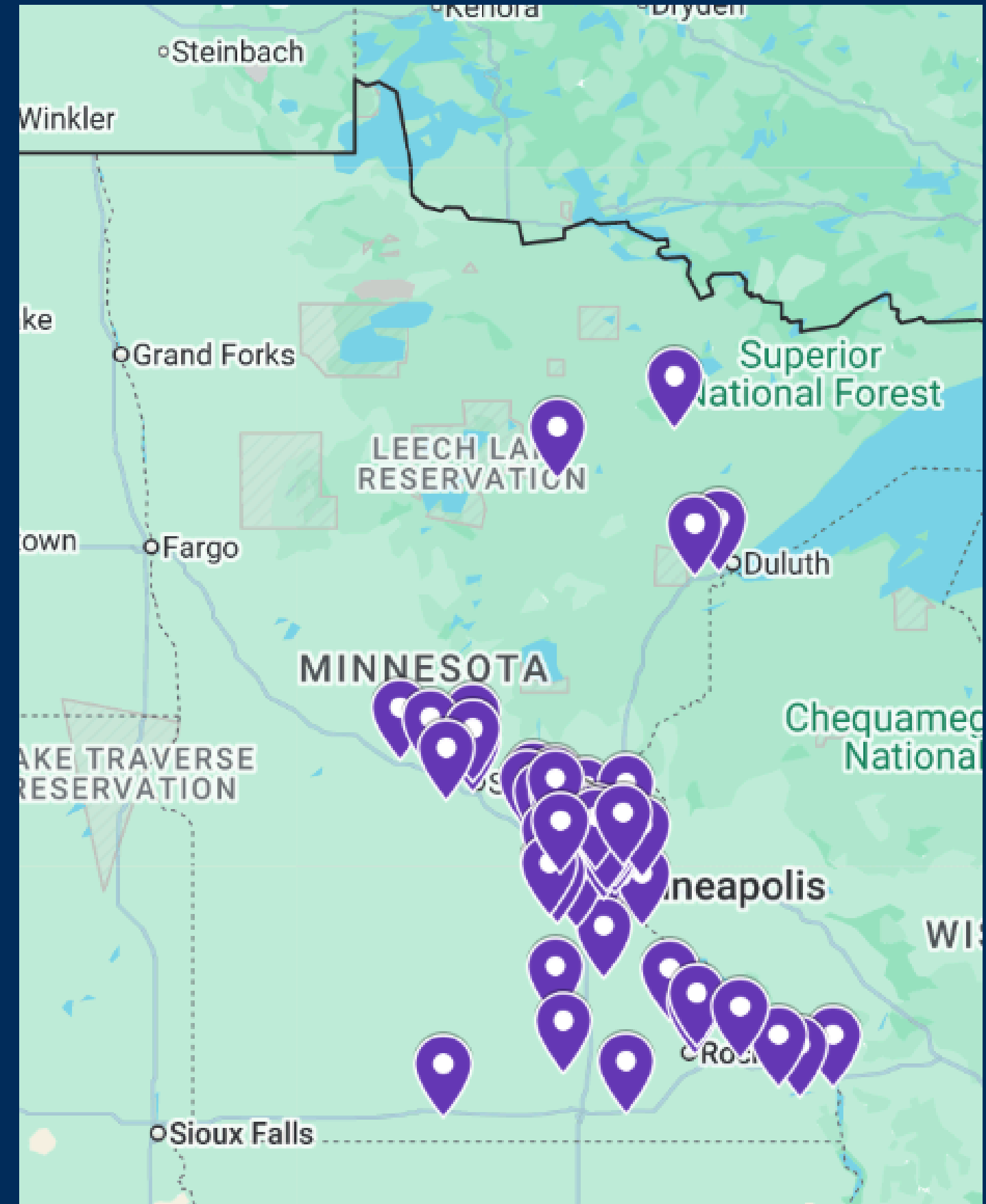
2026 Participating Teams

Albany Area
 Andover High School
 Anoka*
 Apollo (St. Cloud)
 Apple Valley*
 Austin High School
 Benilde-St. Margaret's*
 Big Lake*
 Bloomington Kennedy & Jefferson*
 Breck School
 Burnsville High School*
 Centennial*
 Champlin Park High School*
 Chanhasen High School
 Chaska High School
 Cloquet High School
 Columbia Heights High School
 Community School of Excellence
 Cretin-Derham Hall
 DeLaSalle High School*
 Eagan High School*
 Eagle Ridge Academy
 East Ridge High School
 Eastview*
 Eden Prairie High School*
 Edina
 Elk River*
 Fairmont High School*
 Farmington High School*
 FIT Academy
 Forest Lake High School
 Grand Rapids
 Hastings
 Hiawatha Academies
 Hill Murray
 Hmong College Prep Academy
 Hopkins*

Houston
 Irondale
 La Crescent-Hokah*
 Lakeville North*
 Lakeville South*
 Mahtomedi*
 Maple Grove
 Melrose High School*
 Minneapolis Camden*
 Minneapolis Edison*
 Minneapolis North*
 Minneapolis Roosevelt*
 Minneapolis South*
 Minneapolis Southwest*
 Minneapolis Washburn*
 Minnehaha Academy
 Minnetonka*
 Monticello*
 Mounds View High School*
 Mountain Iron-Buhl
 North St. Paul*
 Northfield
 NRHEG
 Orono High School
 Osseo Senior High School
 Park Center
 Park Cottage Grove*
 Pine Island*
 Prior Lake
 Proctor*
 Richfield*
 Robbinsdale Armstrong & Cooper*
 Rochester Century
 Rochester Mayo*
 Rocori
 Rogers

Rosemount*
 Roseville Area*
 Rushford-Peterson
 Sartell High School*
 Shakopee High School
 Simley High School*
 South St. Paul*
 Southwest Christian
 Spectrum High School
 Spring Lake Park*
 St. Anthony Village
 St. Charles High School
 St. Cloud Tech*
 St. Louis Park High School*
 St. Michael-Albertville*
 St. Paul Central
 St. Paul Como Park
 St. Paul Harding
 St. Paul Highland Park
 St. Paul Humboldt
 St. Paul Johnson
 St. Paul Washington
 Stillwater Area
 Tartan High School*
 Totino-Grace High School
 Two Rivers High School*
 Waterville-Elysian-Morristown*
 Wayzata
 White Bear Lake
 Woodbury*

*Indicates returning team





USA FLAG™ 5'S

RULEBOOK

WHY USA FLAG 5'S?

Olympic pathway

USA FLAG 5's is the sanctioned format for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Officials trained now are building toward the biggest stage.

International standard

Unified rules align with IFAF / World Games and international competition format.

Structured officiating pathway

USA Football provides a certified Officials Course that opens doors to national and international assignments.

Mostly familiar

Core play still feels like flag football. Key differences are targeted and learnable,

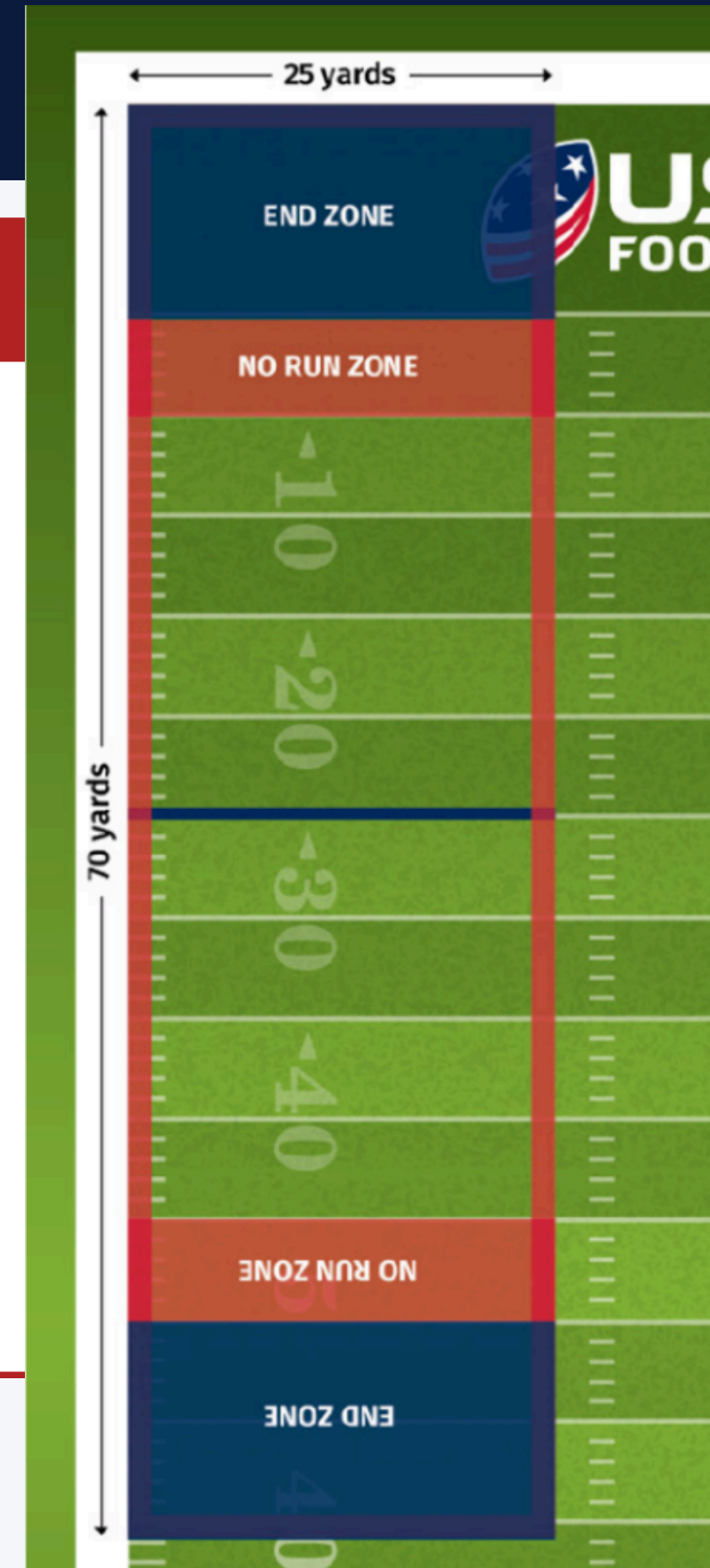
GAME STRUCTURE & TIMING



OVERVIEW & PHILOSOPHIES

USA FLAG 5'S

- 5v5 Format with a 25 x 70 field
- Start at own 5-yard line
- 4 downs to get a first down, 4 downs to score
- No Run Zones - 5 yard line to goal line
- Key Philosophies
 - Emphasize flow and minimal contact
 - Clear structure for rushing and timing



NFL FLAG

- 4 downs to cross midfield
- 3 downs to score after midfield
- 4th down: declare PUNT or PLAY
- Punt → opponent starts at own 5-yd line
- Go for it (fail) → opponent at spot

USA FLAG 5'S

- 4 downs to cross midfield
- 4 downs to score after midfield
- NO “punting” just fail/turnover
- All turnovers (except INT) → own 5-yd line
- INT returnable; all other possession starts at 5

OFFICIAL NOTE

There is no punt declaration in USA FLAG. If a team fails to cross midfield or score, possession simply changes. The visiting team still calls the opening coin toss — same as NFL FLAG.

CLOCK & TIMING RULES

ELEMENT	NFL FLAG (Regular Season)	NFL FLAG (Tournament)	USA FLAG LEAGUE	USA FLAG TOURNAMENT
Game Length	2×24 min	2×12 min	2×20 min	Youth: 2×12 Jr: 2×15 Adult: 2×20
Halftime	2 min	1 min	5 min	2 min
Play Clock	40 sec	25 sec	30 sec	30 sec
Timeouts	1×60s/half	3×30s game	2×30s/half	None in OT
Mercy Rule	35 pts	28 pts	30 pts	30 pts
OT Start	Home calls	Home calls	Visiting calls	Visiting calls

RUSHING, BLITZING & RIGHT OF WAY



NEW TERMINOLOGY BLITZER vs. RUSHER

USA FLAG introduces two distinct roles that NFL FLAG treated as one.

BLITZER

- Must be 7+ yards from LOS at snap
- Raises hand BEFORE snap to declare
- Granted RIGHT OF WAY to rush QB
- Rush must be immediate, quick & straight
- Loses ROW if slow, indirect, or doesn't rush QB
- Max 2 blitzers per play
- Signal while < 7 yds = Illegal Signal (5 yds)

RUSHER

- Any defender who legally crosses LOS
- Does NOT raise hand / declare
- Legal AFTER a handoff is made
- All defenders become rushers after handoff
- No specific rush-line restriction applies
- NFL FLAG had one role; now split into two
- Think of it as: post-handoff rush

OFFICIAL TIP

Watch for illegal signals: if 3+ players raise hands OR a player signals while inside 7 yards after the snapper touches the ball, flag it. Live ball foul. 5 yards from LOS.

RIGHT OF PLACE & RIGHT OF WAY The Framework

These two concepts may be brand new for officials coming from NFL FLAG. They govern who is responsible when contact occurs.

RIGHT OF PLACE (ROP)

- Given to a STATIONARY player in normal posture
- Pure vertical movement (e.g. jumping to catch) does NOT forfeit ROP
- ROP SUPERSEDES Right of Way = highest priority
- A 'still' offensive player is NOT shielding, even if they obstruct

RIGHT OF WAY (ROW)

- Given to a player moving in a regular established direction
- Blitzers have ROW once they signal & rush straight to QB spot
- ROW is LOST if the blitzer slows, changes direction, or doesn't rush QB
- ROW is lower priority than Right of Place

PRIORITY HIERARCHY: Right of Place > Right of Way > General movement

Watch the provided clips illustrating Right of Place and Right of Way scenarios. .

ROUGHING THE PASSER

STRICTER IN USA FLAG

NFL FLAG

Contact unless ruled incidental = penalty
(+5 yds from LOS, auto 1st down)

USA FLAG 5'S ★ STRICTER

NO contact at all! Even attempting to block a pass and making contact = penalty
(+10 yds from LOS, auto 1st down)

SCENARIO WALK-THROUGH:

LEGAL Blitzer knocks down a pass w/ no QB contact

FOUL Blitzer tips ball AND grazes QB arm or shoulder. PENALTY even if incidental

FOUL Blitzer makes contact in any attempt to block pass. PENALTY

LEGAL Blitzer pulls QB's flag behind LOS (sack). No body contact required

PENALTY CHANGES



DEFENSIVE PENALTIES NFL FLAG vs. USA FLAG

PENALTY	NFL FLAG	USA FLAG 5'S	STATUS
Pass Interference	+Auto 1st (spot)	+10 yds + auto 1st	MODIFIED
Holding/Illegal Contact	+5 yds + auto 1st	-10 yds from spot + 1st	MODIFIED
Stripping	+5 yds + auto 1st	+10 yds + auto 1st	MODIFIED
Unnecessary Roughness	+10 yds + auto 1st	+10 yds from end of play	SAME
Unsportsmanlike	+10 yds + auto 1st	+10 yds from end of play	SAME
Offsides	+5 yds + 1st down	+5 yds (no auto 1st)	MODIFIED
Illegal Rush	+5 yds + 1st down	+5 yds (no auto 1st)	MODIFIED
Roughing the Passer	+5 yds + 1st down	+10 yds + auto 1st	MODIFIED
Illegal Signal	N/A	+5 yds (LIVE ball)	NEW

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES NFL FLAG vs. USA FLAG

PENALTY	NFL FLAG	USA FLAG 5'S	STATUS
Unnecessary Roughness	-10 yds + loss of down	-10 yds + loss of down	SAME
Unsportsmanlike/Taunt	-10 yds + loss of down	-10 yds from end of play	MODIFIED
Offside / False Start	-5 yds + loss of down	-5 yds (no loss of down)	MODIFIED
Illegal Forward Pass	-5 yds + loss of down	-5 yds + loss of down	SAME
Pass Interference	-5 yds + loss of down	-10 yds + loss of down	MODIFIED
Illegal Motion	-5 yds + loss of down	-5 yds + loss of down	SAME
Delay of Game	-5 yds + loss of down	-5 yds (no loss of down)	MODIFIED
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yds + loss of down	-5 yds + loss of down	SAME
Center Sneak	Same penalty structure	-5 yds + loss of down	SAME
Backwards Pass	Covered under illegal pass	-5 yds + loss of down	NEW
Screening/Blocking	-5 yds + loss of down	-10 yds + loss of down	MODIFIED
Charging	-5 yds + loss of down	-10 yds + loss of down	MODIFIED

SCORING & OVERTIME



SCORING & OVERTIME KEY DIFFERENCES

SCORING: Identical in both formats — TD=6, PAT 1pt (5-yd, pass only) or 2pt (10-yd, run/pass), Safety=2, INT returned=6 (reg), 2 (OT/PAT)

OVERTIME DIFFERENCES:

NFL FLAG OT

- Home team calls OT coin toss
- 1st OT: 1 play from 5-yd (1pt) OR 10-yd (2pt)
- 2nd OT: must attempt 2-pt from 10-yd
- 3rd OT: 1 play from 5-yd going OUT. Most yards wins
- Each team gets 1 coaches challenge (rule misapplication only)

USA FLAG OT

- Visiting team calls OT coin toss ★ DIFFERENT
- 1st OT: full series from midfield - both teams
- Subsequent OT: 1-pt try from 5-yd line
- No timeouts in OT (same)
- No coaches challenge system. Rather officials unanimous vote

OTHER NOTABLE DIFFERENCES — DON'T MISS THESE

BALL SPOTTING

MODIFIED

NFL FLAG: ball spotted where flag is pulled. USA FLAG: ball spotted where the BALL IS (not feet/hips) Same concept but explicitly defined as ball position.

QB SACK

MODIFIED

NFL FLAG: ball spotted where possession of the ball is when flag pulled. USA FLAG: ball placed where quarterback's FEET are when flag is pulled. Subtle difference for close spots.

DEAD BALL — BODY CONTACT

MODIFIED

NFL FLAG: knee, shin, leg, forearm, or arm touching ground. USA FLAG: any body part OTHER than feet or hands touching ground. No knee/shin/leg distinction.

JUMPING / DIVING

MODIFIED

NFL FLAG: ball carrier cannot jump/dive/hurdle (exception: catching or pulling flags). USA FLAG: diving/leaping to ADVANCE the ball = flag guarding. Spinning allowed but can't leave feet to avoid flag pull.

INADVERTENT WHISTLE

SAME

Both: same two options; take ball where whistle blew (down consumed) OR replay from LOS.

RULING CHALLENGES

MODIFIED

NFL FLAG: 1 coaches challenge in OT (rule misapplication only). USA FLAG: any team can use a timeout to challenge; if no timeout remaining, officials can reverse unanimously.

QUICK REFERENCE: TOP 10 POINTS TO REMEMBER

1 After midfield: 4 downs (not 3) to score

2 No “punting.” A failed possession = opponent starts at own 5

3 Blitzer (declared) has Right of Way; Right of Place supersedes

4 Roughing the passer: ANY contact = penalty (no 'incidental' exception)

5 Illegal Signal: 3+ hands raised or signal < 7 yds = 5-yd live ball foul

6 Roughing: +10 yds + auto 1st (was +5 yds in NFL FLAG)

7 Pass Interference (off): -10 yds (was -5); on defense: +10 yds

8 Mercy rule: 30 points (not 35/28)

9 OT coin toss: visiting team calls (not home team)

10 Ball spot on sack: QB's FEET (not possession spot)

QUESTIONS?

Open floor — 10 minutes

- USA Football Rulebook v2026.1 — full text
- Officials Course: usafootball.com/officials
- USA FLAG 5's Field Diagram (Rule 1, Section 7)

Good luck on game day.