

## 2021 Youth Flag Football Rules

### Rule 1. The Game, Field, Players, and Equipment

#### Section 1. General Provisions

##### Article 1. The Game – 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade

- The game shall be played between 2 teams of 5 players each. 5 players are required to start a game and avoid a forfeit. The game may be continued with as few as 3 players.

##### Article 2. The Game – Middle School

- The game shall be played between 2 teams of 4 players each. 4 players are required to start a game and avoid a forfeit. The game may be continued with as few as 3 players.

##### Article 3. Supervision

- The game shall be played under the supervision of 2 to 3 officials.
- A coach for the team on offense is allowed on the field to direct players. That coach may remain on the field, but may not give direction (either verbally or non-verbally) once the quarterback receives the snap.
- A coach for the team on defense is allowed on the field to direct players. That coach may remain on the field, but may not give direction (either verbally or non-verbally) once the quarterback receives the snap. The defensive coach must be deeper than the deepest defender at the snap and must not physically or visually impair offensive receivers.
- Penalty – Illegal Coaching (non-player)
  - First occurrence (if no substantive effect on the play) – verbal warning
  - Second occurrence (or first if substantive effect on the play) – offense 5 yards from the previous spot or defense 5 yards succeeding spot
  - Third occurrence – offense 10 yards from the previous spot or defense 10 yards succeeding spot – in both instances, coach is prohibited from coaching on the field

##### Article 4. Captains

- Each coach shall designate to the Referee the captain(s).

##### Article 5. Persons Subject to the Rules

- Players, nonplayers, and spectators affiliated with the team are subject to the Rules of the game and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

##### Article 6. Referee's Authority

- The Referee has authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the Rules. The Referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game.

#### Article 7. Official's Authority

- The officials shall assume authority for the contest 15 minutes prior to the scheduled game time, or as soon as they arrive. The officials' jurisdiction extends through the Referee's declaration of the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half or overtime.

### Section 2. The Field

#### Article 1. Safety Margin

- Each league shall determine an appropriate safety margin around the field.

#### Article 2. Adjacent Fields

- Each league shall determine an appropriate safety margin between fields.

#### Article 3. Field Markings

- The field size is 30 yards wide by 70 yards long including two 10-yard end zones and a midfield line-to-gain.
- No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.

#### Article 4. Facility Limitations

- In case of facility limitations, distances of field length and width may be modified.

#### Article 5. Goal Line

- The entire width of each goal line shall be a part of the end zone.

#### Article 6. Team Box and Spectator Areas

- Both teams will be located on the same side of the field. Only coaches and other active team personnel should be on this side of the field. Spectators shall remain on the opposite side of the field.

#### Article 7. End Zone Cones

- Each end zone shall be marked with cones at each of the 4 corners.

#### Article 8. Sideline Zone Line-to-Gain Markers

- The midfield line-to-gain shall be marked with cones at each sideline.

#### Article 9. Hash Marks

- A hash mark noting the center of the field may be placed at the intersection of each no-run zone and line-to-gain line.

### Section 3. Game Equipment

#### Article 1. The Ball

- Balls must be the correct size which is: pee wee size for Grades 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> and junior size for Grades 5<sup>th</sup> and up.

#### Article 2. Ball Spotters

- Two cones should be used to mark the line of scrimmage and the rush cone. These two cones will always be 7 yards apart.

### Section 4. Player Equipment – Required

#### Article 1. Jersey

- Each player shall wear the league-provided jersey.

#### Article 2. Pants/Shorts

- Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets are not allowed.
- Player shorts cannot be the same color as the flag the player is wearing.

#### Article 3. Flag Belt

- Each player shall wear the league provided flags and/or flag belt.

#### Article 4. Shoes

- Cleats are allowed, however cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.

#### Article 5. Penalty

- 5 yards, previous spot, player removed from the game for at least one play and until equipment is legal.

### Section 5. Player Equipment – Optional

#### Article 1. Ace Bandage

- Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers.

#### Article 2. Gloves

- Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads.

#### Article 3. Headwear

- Players may wear a knit or stocking cap as long as it does not have a bill or knot.

#### Article 4. Pads

- Players may wear elbow pads and kneepads.

#### Article 5. Mouth and Tooth Protector

- Protective mouthpieces are highly recommended.

#### Article 6. Play Books

- Players may wear a soft, pliable wrist/forearm band that contains plays.

#### Article 7. Sunglasses

- Players may wear pliable and non-rigid sunglasses.

### Section 6. Player Equipment – Illegal

#### Article 1. Illegal Equipment

- Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
- Penalty – Illegal Equipment, 5 yards, previous spot, player removed from the game for at least one play and until illegal equipment is removed

### Section 7. Player Equipment – Missing or Illegal

- When any required player equipment is missing or when illegal equipment is found on any incoming substitute or player, correction must be made before participation. An official's time-out shall be declared to permit prompt repair of equipment which becomes illegal or defective through use.

### Rule 2. Definitions of Playing Terms

- **Diving** – an intentional act by a player of leaving their feet in head-first manner in an attempt to gain yardage without the ability to land on their feet
- **Quarterback** – the offensive player that receives the snap from the center (may or may not be the player that is lined up behind the center).
- **Rush Line** – an imaginary line running across the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the Line of Scrimmage.

- **Rusher** – any defensive player(s) who is at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage as denoted by the rush marker at or after the snap.
- **Sliding** – an intentional act by a player of leaving their feet in a feet-first manner in an attempt to gain yardage without the ability to land on their feet
- All other definitions shall be as contained in the NIRSA Flag and Touch Football Rules Book.

### Rule 3. Periods, Time Factors, and Substitutions

#### Section 1. Start of Each Half

##### Article 1. Coin Toss

- At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
- The winner of the coin toss gets to choose one of the following options: offense, defense, defer or field direction. The loser of the coin toss chooses from the remaining of the above options.

##### Article 2. Change Halves

- Teams shall change end zones between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> halves

##### Article 3. Forfeit Time

- Game time is forfeit time.

##### Article 4. Start 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Half

- Unless moved by penalty, the ball shall be snapped on the 5 yard line to start each half.

#### Section 2. Game Time

##### Article 1. Playing Time and Intermissions

- Games are played in two 20 minute halves.
- Halftime is five minutes long.

##### Article 2. Interrupted and Shortened Games

- Each league will determine the procedure for interrupted games and weather policies.

##### Article 3. Extension of Periods

- The half will be extended by an untimed down if during the last timed down of the half, one of the following occurred:
  - There was a foul – other than unsportsmanlike, nonplayer, fouls for which enforcement by Rule results in a safety, or fouls which specify loss of down) by either team and the penalty is accepted. For loss of down fouls, any score by the team which fouled is cancelled.
  - There was a double foul.
  - There was an inadvertent whistle.
  - If a touchdown was scored, the try is attempted.
- If the qualifying fouls, a double foul or inadvertent whistle occurs during an untimed down, the procedure is repeated.

#### Article 4. Game Timer

- An official on the field shall keep the time of the game.

#### Article 5. First Half and First 19 Minutes of 2nd Half

- The clock stops only for timeouts in the first half and the first 19 minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.

#### Article 6. 1 Minute Warning

- There will be a 1 minute warning in each half. The clock will stop for the announcement and will start with the next legal snap.

#### Article 7. Last 1 Minutes

- The clock will operate according to NFHS (high school) rules in the last minute of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.

#### Article 8. Correct Timing Errors

- The Referee shall have authority to correct obvious timing errors if discovery is prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> live ball following the error unless the period has officially ended.

#### Article 9. Ending a Period

- The Referee shall cross both arms overhead to indicate the period has officially ended.

### Section 3. Tie Game

#### Article 1. Mandatory Meeting

- If the game ends with a tie score, the officials will meet with the head coach and captains of each team at the center of the field to discuss overtime procedure.

## Article 2. Coin Toss

- A coin will be tossed by the Referee to determine options as at the start of the game. The visiting captain shall call the toss. This will be the only coin flip if there are multiple overtime periods. Choices will alternate between teams. The winner of the toss shall choose either offense, defense or end of the field. The loser of the toss shall choose from the remaining options. All overtime periods will be played on the same end of the field.

## Article 3. Tie Breaker

- Each team will be given the opportunity to go for a 1 or 2 point conversion. If the score is still tied, a second round conversion opportunity will be given to each team. The team that went first in the 1<sup>st</sup> round will go second in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round and vice versa. If the score is still tied after the second round of extra point conversions the game will end as a tie. During playoffs, games will continue until a winner is decided. Teams must go for a two point conversion in the 3<sup>rd</sup> round and later rounds.

## Article 4. Fouls and Penalties

### Section 4. Time-Outs

#### Article 1. How Charged

- Each timeout shall be charged by the Referee to himself or to one of the teams.

#### Article 2. Official's Time-Out

- The Referee may declare an official's timeout for any situation not covered elsewhere by the rules.

#### Article 3. Charged Time-Outs

- Each team has 2 timeouts per half.
- Each team has one timeout for all overtime periods.

#### Article 4. Length of Time-Outs

- Charged time-outs shall be 45 seconds in length unless shortened by mutual agreement of coaches.

#### Article 5. Coach-Referee Conference

- When a team requests a charged timeout for a misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule, both officials will confer with the head coach. Such request must be made prior to the time the ball becomes live following the play to be reviewed unless the half has officially ended. If the ruling is changed, the timeout becomes an official's

timeout. If the ruling is not changed, it is a charged timeout. If the team does not have a timeout remaining, a delay of game penalty will be assessed.

#### Article 6. Notification

- Both teams shall be notified when 15 seconds before a charged timeout expires. The head coach shall be notified by the officials when their team timeouts have been exhausted.

#### Article 7. Authorized Conferences

#### Article 8. Injured Player

- Any injured or apparently injured player for whom the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least 1 down unless the halftime or overtime intermissions occurs. Any player who is bleeding, has an open wound, or has blood on their uniform shall be considered an injured player.

#### Article 9. Concussion

- Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion, shall be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional.

### Section 5. Delays

#### Article 1. Delay of Game

- After the ball is declared ready for play, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
- Putting the ball in play before it is declared ready for play.
- Deliberately advancing the ball after it is declared dead.
- Penalty – Delay of Game, 5 yards, previous spot

### Section 6. Conserving or Consuming Time

#### Article 1. Illegally Conserving or Consuming Time

- When a team attempts to conserve or consume time illegally, the Referee shall order the clock started or stopped.

### Section 7. Substitutions

#### Article 1. Eligible Substitutions

- Between downs any number of eligible substitutes may replace players provided the substitution is completed by having the replaced players off the field before the ball is snapped. Incoming substitutes must enter the field from the team sideline.



Replaced players must leave the field to the team sideline. An entering substitute shall be on their team's side of the neutral zone when the ball is snapped.

- Penalty – Illegal Substitution, 5 yards

#### Article 2. Legal Substitutions

- During the same dead ball period, no substitute shall become a player and then withdraw and no player shall withdraw and then re-enter as a substitute unless a penalty is accepted, a dead ball foul occurs or there is a charged time-out.
- Penalty – Illegal Substitution, Dead Ball, 5 yards

### Rule 4. Ball In Play, Dead Ball, and Out-Of-Bounds

#### Section 1. Ball In Play – Dead Ball

##### Article 1. Dead Ball Becomes Live

- A dead ball, after having been declared ready for play, becomes a live ball when it is snapped legally.

##### Article 2. Ball Declared Dead

- A live ball becomes dead when:
  - It goes out of bounds.
  - Any part of the runner other than their hand(s) or foot (feet) touches the ground.
  - A touchback, touchdown, safety or successful try is made.
  - A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
  - A backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players. A ball snapped, which hits the ground, is dead at the spot where it hits the ground.
  - A runner has their flag removed legally by an opponent.
  - A runner is legally tagged.
  - A ball is kicked.
  - An official sounds their whistle inadvertently during a down or during a down for which the penalty for a foul is declined, when:
    - The ball is in player possession – the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where declared dead or replay the down.
    - The ball is loose – other than a legal forward pass - the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down.
    - During a legal forward pass – the ball is returned to the previous spot and the down replayed.

- If a foul occurs during a down which the ball is declared dead by an inadvertent whistle, an accepted penalty shall be administered as in any other play situation and the inadvertent whistle shall be disregarded.

## Section 2. Inbounds Spot

### Article 1. Placement of Dead Ball

- The ball shall be placed at or near the center of the field at the yard line that corresponds to the dead ball spot.

### Article 2. Anywhere Between the Hash Marks

- A must put the ball in play at the center of the field.

## Section 3. Out-Of-Bounds

### Article 1. Player Out-of-Bounds

- A player or other person is out of bounds when any part of the person is touching anything, other than another player or official, who is on or outside the sideline or end line.

### Article 2. Player in Possession Out-of-Bounds

- A ball in player possession is out of bounds when the runner or the ball touches anything, other than another player or official, which is on or outside the sideline or end line.

### Article 3. Loose Ball Out-of-Bounds

- A loose ball is out of bounds when it touches anything, including a player or official, who is out of bounds.

## Rule 5. Series of Downs, Number of Down, And Team Possession After Penalty

### Section 1. A Series – How Started, How Broken, Renewed

#### Article 1. A Down Is a Unit

- A down is a unit of the game which starts with a legal snap and ends when the ball next becomes dead. Between downs is any period when the ball is dead.

#### Article 2. Series of Downs

- All possession changes, except interceptions other than during the Try, start on the offense's 5-yard line unless moved by penalty.

- The offense has three (3) consecutive downs to reach the line-to gain.
- Any down may be repeated or lost if provided by the rules.

#### Article 3. Zone Line-to-Gain

- The line-to gain (either midfield or the opponent's goal line) shall be the line in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. If distance has been lost, the original line in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series shall be the line-to-gain.

#### Article 4. Awarding a New Series

- If the offense fails to achieve the line-to-gain, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line.

### Section 2. Down And Possession After A Penalty

#### Article 1. Penalty Resulting in a 1<sup>st</sup> Down

- After a penalty which leaves the ball in possession of a team beyond its line-to-gain, or when a penalty stipulates an automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be 1<sup>st</sup> down with the next line-to-gain.

#### Article 2. Foul Before Change of Team Possession

- Following a distance penalty between the goal lines which occurs during a down and before any change of team possession during that down, the ball belongs to A. The down shall be repeated unless the penalty also involves loss of down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the line-to-gain. If the penalty involves loss of a down, the down shall count as 1 of the 3 in that series.

#### Article 3. Foul After Change of Team Possession

- Following a distance penalty for a foul committed after team possession has changed during that down, the ball belongs to the team in possession when the foul occurred. The down and distance established by that penalty shall be 1<sup>st</sup> down with line-to-gain.

#### Article 4. Penalty Declined

- If a penalty is declined, the number of the next down shall be whatever it would have been if that foul had not occurred.

#### Article 5. Rule Decisions Final

- A rules decision may not be changed after the ball is next legally snapped.

## Rule 6. Kicking The Ball

- All kicks (intentional striking of the ball with the knee(s), lower leg(s) or foot (feet) are illegal. The ball shall be declared dead immediately.
- Penalty – Illegal Kicking, 10 yards

## Rule 7. Snapping, Handing, And Passing The Ball

### Section 1. The Scrimmage

#### Article 1. The Start

- All plays must be started by a legal snap next to the marker denoting the line of scrimmage.

#### Article 2. Ball Responsibility

- A players are responsible for retrieving the ball after a down.

#### Article 3. Stances

- Players may use a 2, 3, or 4 point stance.

### Section 2. Prior To The Snap

#### Article 1. Encroachment

- Following the ready for play and until the snap, no B player may encroach, touch the ball, nor may any player contact opponents or interfere with them in any other way. This includes standing in the neutral zone to give defensive signals or shifting through the zone. After the snapper has placed their hand(s) on the ball in its proper position for snap, it is encroachment for any player to break the scrimmage line plane, except for the snapper's right to be over the ball.
- Penalty – Encroachment, Dead Ball, 5 yards, succeeding spot

#### Article 2. False Start

- No A player shall make a false start. A false start includes simulating a charge or start of a play. An infraction of this rule may be penalized whether or not the ball is snapped and the penalty for any resultant encroachment shall be cancelled.
- Penalty – False Start, Dead Ball, 5 yards, succeeding spot

#### Article 3. Snap

- The snapper, after assuming proper position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of a play until it is snapped. An infraction of this provision may be

penalized, whether or not the ball is snapped, and the penalty for any resultant encroachment foul by an opponent shall be cancelled. When over the ball, the snapper shall not have their feet beyond the line of scrimmage. The snapper shall pass the ball back from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion of the hand(s). The ball shall leave the hand(s) in this motion. There is no rule restriction regarding placement of the long axis of the ball.

- Penalty – Illegal Snap, Dead Ball, 5 yards, succeeding spot

### Section 3. Position And Action During The Snap

#### Article 1. Legal Position

- The quarterback must be clearly behind the nearest A player who is on the line of scrimmage, unless taking a direct snap.
- Anytime at or after the ball is marked ready for play, each A player must momentarily be 5 yards or more from the sideline, unless recognized and covered by a B player
- Penalty – Illegal formation, 5 yards
- The snapper may snap the ball between or beside their legs or may be to either side of the ball as long as they are facing either their opponent's goal line or either sideline.
- Penalty – Illegal snap, Dead Ball, 5 yards, succeeding spot

#### Article 2. Minimum Line Players

- An offensive team must have a minimum of two players on the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
- Penalty - Illegal Formation, 5 yards

#### Article 3. Motion

- Only 1 A player may be in motion, but not toward the opponent's goal line at the snap.
- Penalty – Illegal Motion, 5 yards, previous spot

#### Article 4. Direct Snap

- Direct snaps are legal.

#### Article 5. Shift

- In a snap preceded by a huddle or shift, all A players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary in legal position for at least 1 full second before the snap.
- Penalty – Illegal Shift, 5 yards

## Section 4. Handing The Ball

### Article 1. Handoffs

- Handoffs beyond the line of scrimmage or after a change of possession are illegal.
- Penalty – Illegal Handing, 5 yards, spot of the foul
- Once the quarterback completes a handoff, all defensive players become legal rushers.
- If the quarterback simulates a handoff, defensive players may defend players other than the quarterback behind the line of scrimmage as long as they do not pressure the quarterback.

## Section 5. Running

### Article 1. No Run Zone

- While in the No Run Zones (a 5 yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the endzone), teams may not run the ball thru the line of scrimmage in any fashion. All plays, including those that begin with a handoff, must have a forward pass that crosses the line of scrimmage.
- Penalty – Illegal Run, 5 yards, previous spot
- Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

### Article 2. Quarterback Runs

- The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade leagues.
- Penalty – Illegal Run, 5 yards, previous spot
- The quarterback may run once on each side of midfield per possession in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up.
- Penalty – Illegal Run, 5 yards, previous spot
- The quarterback may receive a forward pass and run past the line of scrimmage.

### Article 3. Illegal Rush

- It is illegal for a defender to pressure the quarterback who was not behind the rush marker following the snap.
- Penalty – Illegal Rush, 5 yards, previous spot

## Section 6. Backward Pass And Fumble

### Article 1. When Legal

- If the quarterback simulates a backward pass, defensive players may defend players other than the quarterback behind the line of scrimmage as long as they do not pressure the quarterback.

- The runner shall not intentionally throw or fumble the ball out-of-bounds.
- Penalty – Illegal Pass, 5 yards from the spot of the pass or fumble, loss of down. Clock will start on the ready for play.

#### Article 2. Caught or Intercepted

- A backward pass or fumble in flight may be caught or intercepted by any other player inbounds and advanced. A player may not throw and untouched backward pass to him/herself.
- Penalty – Illegal Pass, 5 yards from the spot of the pass and loss of down if by A

#### Article 3. Simultaneous Catch by Opposing Players

- If a backward pass or fumble in flight is caught simultaneously by members or opposing teams inbounds, the ball becomes dead at the spot of the catch and belongs to the offensive team.

#### Article 4. Out-of-Bounds

- A backward pass or fumble which goes out-of-bounds between the goal lines belongs to the offensive team at the out-of-bounds spot. If out-of-bounds behind a goal line, it is a touchback or safety.

#### Article 5. Ball Dead When It Hits the Ground

- A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead at the spot where it touches the ground and belongs to the offensive team.

#### Article 6. Rusher Eligibility Following

- Once the quarterback releases a backward pass, all defensive players become legal rushers.

### Section 7. Legal And Illegal Forward Pass

#### Article 1. Legal Forward Pass

- All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. During a scrimmage down and before team possession has changed, a forward pass may be thrown provided the passer's feet are on or behind the plane of the line of scrimmage when the ball leaves the passer's hand. Only 1 forward pass may be thrown per down.
- Note – In order to adhere to the no-run zone requirements, a forward pass must cross the line of scrimmage if a team begins the down in a no-run zone. Note – this is not a foul itself, but will result in one unless the ball becomes dead prior to crossing the line of scrimmage.

- If the quarterback simulates a forward pass, defensive players may defend players other than the quarterback behind the line of scrimmage as long as they do not pressure the quarterback.

#### Article 2. Illegal Forward Pass

- If the passer's foot is beyond the plane of the line of scrimmage when the ball leaves his/her hand.
- If thrown after team possession has changed.
- If a passer catches his/her untouched forward pass.
- If there is more than 1 forward pass per down.
- A team may not attempt a forward pass following a forward handoff.
- Penalty – Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards, spot of the foul and a loss of down if by A before possession changes.

#### Article 3. Illegal Forward Pass – Corec Rule

- This article is reserved for future rules expansion.

#### Article 4. Illegal Forward Pass – Corec Rule

- This article is reserved for future rules expansion.

#### Article 5. After Illegal Forward Pass

- When an illegal forward pass touches the ground or goes out-of-bounds the ball becomes dead and belongs to the passing team, at the spot from where the pass was thrown, unless a new series of downs has been created. In such a case the ball belongs to the passing team if, after enforcement of the penalty, the ball is left in advance of the line-to-gain, or belongs to the opponents if the ball, after the penalty, did not make the next line-to-gain and the foul occurred during 3<sup>rd</sup> down. If a player catches an illegal forward pass, the ball continues in play until declared dead.

### Section 8. Completed Or Intercepted Passes

#### Article 1. Pass Caught or Intercepted

- A forward pass is completed when caught by a member of the passing team inbounds. A forward pass is intercepted when caught by a member of the opposing team inbounds. It is counted as a completion or interception as long as the first part of the receiver to make contact with the ground after the catch touches inbounds.

#### Article 2. Simultaneous Catch by Opposing Players



- If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams inbounds, the ball becomes dead at the spot of the catch and belongs to the offensive team.

#### Section 9. Incomplete Pass

##### Article 1. Becomes Dead

- When a forward pass touches the ground or anything out-of-bounds, it becomes dead.

#### Section 10. Forward Pass Interference

##### Article 1. Interference

- During a down in which a legal forward pass crosses A's line of scrimmage, contact which interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond A's line of scrimmage is pass interference unless it occurs when two or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is intentionally deflagged prior to touching a forward pass thrown beyond A's scrimmage line.

##### Article 2. Offensive Pass Interference

- After the ball is snapped, and until the pass has been touched by any A player, there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond A's line of scrimmage.
- Penalty – Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards, previous spot, loss of down

##### Article 3. Defensive Pass Interference

- After the pass is thrown, and until the pass has been touched by any A or B player, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond A's line of scrimmage while the pass is in flight.
- Penalty – Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards, previous spot, automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

##### Article 4. Not Interference

- Contact by B which is obviously away from the direction of the forward pass is not pass interference but may be a personal foul.

##### Article 5. Catchable/Uncatchable

- Whether a pass is catchable or uncatchable has no bearing on offensive and defensive pass interference.

#### Rule 8. Scoring Plays And Touchback

##### Section 1. Communication

## Article 1. Teams and Officials

- The officials will communicate the current score to both coaches after each touchdown, try, and safety. The referee will have final authority to resolve any disagreement regarding the current or final score.

## Section 2. Forfeited Game

### Article 1. Forfeited Score

- The score of a forfeited game shall be: Offended Team-7, Opponent-0. If the offended team is ahead at the time of the forfeit, the score stands.

## Section 3. Mercy Rule

### Article 1. 2 Minute Warning

- If one team is winning by seventeen points or more at or after the one minute warning, the game is over.

## Section 4. Player Responsibility

### Article 1. Player Responsibility

- The player scoring, if requested by the officials, must stop and allow the official to deflag the player.

## Section 5. Touchdown – 6 points

### Article 1. Touchdown Value

- A touchdown is 6 points.

### Article 2. How Scored

- It is a touchdown when a runner advances from the field of play so that the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line. It is a touchdown when a loose ball is caught by a player while the ball is on or behind the opponent's goal line.

## Section 6. Try

### Article 1. Referee's Responsibility and Team's Choice

- The coach of a team that scores a touchdown must declare whether the team wishes to attempt a 1 point conversion or a 2 point conversion. Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty.

#### Article 2. 1 or 2 points

- An opportunity to score 1 point from the 5-yard line or 2 points from the 12-yard line shall be granted to the team scoring a touchdown.

#### Article 3. Try Begins and Ends

- Interceptions are live and may be advanced.
- Interceptions returned for a score by the defense will count 2 points.

#### Article 4. Next Play

- After a try, the ball shall be snapped by the opponent of the scoring team at their own 5 yard line, unless moved by penalty or to begin overtime.

### Section 7. Force And Responsibility

#### Article 1. Force

- The force imparted by a player who passes, snaps, or fumbles the ball shall be considered responsible for the ball's progress in any direction even though its course is deflected, or reversed, after striking a player of either team.

#### Article 2. Responsibility

- The team responsible for a ball being on, above, or behind a goal line is the team whose player:
  - Carries the ball to or across that goal line.
  - Imparts to the ball an impetus which forces it to or across that goal line.
  - Incurs a penalty which leaves the ball on or behind the goal line.

### Section 8. Momentum, Safety, And Touchback

#### Article 1. Safety – 2 points

- It is a safety when:
  - A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line, and it becomes dead there in his/her team's possession.
    - Exception: Momentum Rule – When a defensive player intercepts his/her opponent's forward pass, fumble, or backward pass and his/her original momentum carries him/her into the end zone where the ball is declared dead in his/her team's possession behind the goal line, the ball belongs to the defensive team at the spot where possession was gained.

- A player passes, fumbles, snaps, muffs, or bats a loose ball from the field of play to or across his/her goal line and the ball subsequently becomes dead there in his/her team's possession. This includes when the ball is declared dead on or behind their goal line. However, it does not apply to a legal forward pass which becomes incomplete.
- A player on offense commits any foul for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from a spot in his/her end zone; or throws an illegal forward pass from his/her end zone and the penalty is declined in a situation which leaves him/her in possession at the spot of the illegal pass and with the ball having been forced into the end zone by the passing team.
- After a safety, the ball shall be snapped by the scoring team at their own 5 yard line, unless moved by penalty.

#### Article 2. Touchback

- It is a touchback when:
  - The ball is out-of-bounds behind a goal line (except from an incomplete forward pass), when the ball becomes dead in possession of a player on, above, or behind the player's own goal line, or when the ball becomes dead not in possession on, above, or behind the team's own goal line, and the attacking team is responsible.
- After a touchback, the ball shall be snapped from the nearest 5 yard line, unless moved by penalty.

### Rule 9. Conduct Of Players And Others

#### Section 1. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

##### Article 1. Noncontact Acts

- No player or nonplayer shall commit noncontact acts during a period or intermission. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Refusal to comply or abide by the request or decision of an official.
  - Using words similar to the offensive audibles and quarterback cadence prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with A's signals or movements.
  - Intentionally kicking at the ball, other than during a punt.
  - Leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless replaced or with permission of the Referee.
  - Participating while wearing illegal player equipment.
  - Being outside the team box, but not on the field, during a live ball.
- Penalty – Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, loss of down if by A, automatic first down if by B. If flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified.

##### Article 2. Dead Ball Fouls

- When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, he/she shall not:
  - Intentionally kick the ball.
  - Spike the ball into the ground.
  - Throw the ball high into the air.
- Penalty – Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, loss of down if by A, automatic first down if by B. If flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified.

#### Article 3. Prohibited Acts

- There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players or nonplayers. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Attempting to influence a decision by an official.
  - Disrespectfully addressing an official.
  - Indicating objections to an official’s decision.
  - Holding an unauthorized conference, or being on the field illegally.
  - Using profanity, taunting, insulting, or vulgar language or gestures.
  - Intentionally contacting a game official (also disqualification).
  - Leaving the team box and entering the field during a fight (also disqualification).
- Penalty – Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, loss of down if by A, automatic first down if by B. If flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified.

#### Article 4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Unsportsmanlike Foul

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> unsportsmanlike foul by the same player or nonplayer results in disqualification.

#### Article 5. Ejection

- If a player or nonplayer is ejected from a game due to unsportsmanlike conduct, he/she must leave the field area. The field area is defined as “out of sight, out of sound.” If the ejected player or nonplayer refuses to leave after a reasonable amount of time, the Referee will inform the coach that the game will be forfeited.

#### Article 6. 3<sup>rd</sup> Unsportsmanlike Foul

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> unsportsmanlike foul by the same team results in their forfeiture of the game.

### Section 2. Unfair Acts

#### Article 1. Refusal to Play or Halving the Distance

- If a team refuses to play within 2 minutes after being ordered by the Referee, or if a team repeatedly commits fouls which can be penalized only by halving the distance

to its goal line, the Referee may enforce any penalty he/she considers equitable, including the awarding of a score. For refusal to play, or for repeated fouls, the Referee shall, after 1 warning, forfeit the game to the opponents.

#### Article 2. Unfair Acts

- No player or nonplayer shall use verbiage or commit any act not in accordance with the spirit of fair play for the purposes of confusing an opponent.
- Penalty – Unfair Act, 10 yards.

### Section 3. Personal Fouls

#### Article 1. Restrictions

- No player or nonplayer shall commit a personal foul during a period or an intermission. Any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. No player or nonplayer shall:
  - Strip or attempt to strip the ball from a runner by punching, striking, or grabbing it. Note: Any player who controls a pass with both feet off the ground becomes a runner when the first part of the person touches the ground.
  - Throw the runner to the ground.
  - Hurdle any other player.
  - Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
  - Make contact of any nature with an opponent which is deemed unnecessary including using fists, locked hands, elbows, or any part of the forearm or hand, except according to Rule.
  - Drive or run into an opponent.
  - Position himself/herself on the shoulders or body of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.
  - Tackle the runner by grasping or encircling with the hand(s) or arm(s) and taking the opponent toward the ground as in tackle football (also disqualification).
  - Fight an opponent (also disqualification). Note: Each player who participates in the fight will be assessed 1 flagrant personal foul for fighting.
- Penalty – Illegal Contact, 10 yards, end of the run

#### Article 2. Roughing the Passer

- Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown forward legally. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as he/she is considered out of the play after the pass. Roughing the passer restrictions do not apply if the forward pass is thrown from beyond A's scrimmage line.

- Penalty – Roughing the Passer, 10 yards, previous spot, automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down
  - Note – this foul may be added to the end of the run if the pass was completed

#### Article 3. Screen Blocking

- The block shall take place without contact.
- The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind his/her back when screen blocking.
- Penalty – Illegal blocking, 10 yards, spot of the foul

#### Article 4. Screen Blocking Fundamentals

- A player who screens shall not:
  - Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
  - Make contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
  - Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction. The speed of the player to be screened will determine where the screener may take his/her stationary position. This position will vary and may be 1 to 2 normal steps or strides from the opponent.
  - After assuming his/her legal screening position move to maintain it, unless he/she moves in the same direction and path as his/her opponent. If the screener violates any of these provisions and contact results, he/she has committed a personal foul.
- Penalty – Personal Foul, 10 yards, spot of the foul

#### Article 5. Blocking and Interlocked Interference

- Teammates of a runner or passer may interfere for him/her by screen blocking, but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner.
- Penalty – Personal Foul, 10 yards, spot of the foul

#### Article 6. Use of Hands or Arms by the Defense

- Opponents must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used as a wedge to displace the opponent. A defender may use his/her arms to break a fall or retain his/her balance.
- Penalty – Personal Foul, 10 yards

#### Section 4. Runner

#### Article 1. Flag Belt Removal

- Players must have possession of the ball before they can be deflagged legally by an opponent.
- When a runner loses his/her flag belt either accidentally, inadvertently or on purpose, play continues. The deflagging reverts to 1 hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and knees by an opponent.
- In circumstances where a flag belt is removed illegally by a player, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play.
- Penalty – Illegal Flag Belt Removal, 5 yards, end of run
- An opponent intentionally pulling a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal.
- Penalty – Personal Foul, 10 yards
- Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal.
- Penalty – Personal Foul, 10 yards from the previous spot and player disqualification. If by A, loss of down. If by B, automatic first down.
- A nonplayer deflags or interferes with a runner.
- Penalty – Personal Foul, 10 yards. The Referee will award a touchdown and disqualify the nonplayer.

#### Article 2. Guarding the Flag Belt

- Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. Examples of flag guarding include, but are not limited to:
  - Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt.
  - Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt.
  - Lowering the shoulders in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt.
- Penalty – Flag Guarding, 10 yards, spot of the foul

#### Article 3. Stiff Arm

- The runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with extended hand or arm. This includes the use of a “stiff arm” extended to ward off an opponent attempting to deflag/tag.
- Penalty – Personal Foul, 10 yard, spot of the foul

#### Article 4. Help the Runner

- The runner shall not grasp a teammate or be grasped, pulled or pushed by a teammate.



- Penalty – Helping the Runner, 5 yards, spot of the foul

#### Article 5. Obstruct the Runner

- An opponent shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt or making a legal tag.
- Penalty – Personal Foul, 10 yards, end of the run

#### Article 6. Charge

- A runner shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in his/her path nor attempt to run between two opponents or between an opponent and a sideline, unless the space is such as to provide a reasonable chance for him/her to go through without contact. If a runner in his/her progress has established a straight line path, he/she may not be crowded out of that path, but if an opponent is able to legally establish a defensive position in that path, the runner must avoid contact by changing direction.
- Penalty – Personal Foul, 10 yards

### Section 5. Batting and Kicking

#### Article 1. Batting a Loose Ball

- A backward pass in flight shall not be batted or thrown forward by the passing team.
- Penalty – Illegal batting, 10 yards, spot of the foul

#### Article 2. Batting a Ball in Player Possession

- A ball in player possession shall not be batted forward by a player of the team in possession.
- Penalty – Illegal batting, 10 yards, spot of the foul

#### Article 3. Illegal Kicking

- No player shall intentionally kick a ball. The status of an illegal kick shall be a fumble.
- Penalty – Illegal Kicking, 10 yards, spot of the foul

### Section 6. Illegal Participation

#### Article 1. It is Illegal Participation:

- To have 6 or more players participating at the snap.
- If an injured player is not replaced for at least 1 down unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs.
- To use a player, replaced player, or substitute in a substitution or pretended substitution to deceive opponents at or immediately before the snap.

- For a disqualified player to reenter the game.
- For a replaced player or substitute to hinder an opponent, touch the ball, influence the play, or otherwise participate.
- If, prior to a change of possession, an A or K player goes out-of-bounds and returns inbounds during the down to participate, unless blocked out-of-bounds by an opponent. If a player is blocked out-of-bounds by an opponent and returns inbounds during the down, he/she shall return at the first opportunity. During the down, no player shall intentionally go out-of-bounds and return to the field, intentionally touch the ball, influence the play, or otherwise participate.
- When any player, replaced player, or substitute enters during a down.
- Penalty – Illegal Participation, 10 yards, previous spot

## Rule 10. Enforcement Of Penalties

### Section 1. Procedure After a Foul

#### Article 1. Definitions

- A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is prescribed. Types of fouls are:
  - Dead Ball – A foul which occurs in the time interval after a down has ended and before the ball is next legally snapped.
  - Live Ball – A foul which occurs during a down.
  - Simultaneous with the Snap – An act which becomes a foul when the ball is snapped.

#### Article 2. Coach's Choice

- When a foul occurs during a live ball, the Referee shall, at the end of the down, notify both coaches. He/She shall inform the coach of the offended team regarding the rights of penalty acceptance or declination and shall indicate to him/her the number of the ensuing down, distance to be gained, and status of the ball for each available choice. The distance penalty for any foul may be declined. If the penalty is declined or if there is a double foul, there is no loss of distance. The coach's choice of options may not be revoked. Decisions involving penalties shall be made before any charged time-out is granted.

#### Article 3. Dead Ball Foul

- When a foul occurs during a dead ball either between downs or before a snap, the officials shall not permit the ball to become live. The penalty for any foul between downs, any nonplayer foul, or any unsportsmanlike foul, is enforced from the succeeding spot (Exception 10-3-5 and 10-3-6). If a dead ball foul occurs after time expires for any period, the penalty shall be measured from the succeeding spot. The succeeding spot is where the ball would next be snapped if a foul had not occurred.

#### Article 4. Live Ball/Dead Ball Foul

- When a live ball foul by 1 team is followed by a dead ball foul by the opponent, the penalties are administered separately and in the order of occurrence. When the same team commits a live ball foul followed by 1 or more dead ball fouls, all fouls may be penalized.

#### Article 5. Establishing the Zone Line-to-Gain

- On a live ball foul, mark off the penalty yardage first then establish the zone line-to-gain.
- Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement which occur prior to the ready for play signal shall be administered before setting the zone line-to-gain for a new series.
- Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement which occur after the ready for play signal shall be administered after setting the zone line-to-gain for a new series.

### Section 2. Types of Play and Basic Enforcement Spots

#### Article 1. Live Ball Fouls

- Any live ball foul is penalized according to the All-But-One Enforcement Principle except:
  - A foul which occurs simultaneously with the snap is penalized from the previous spot.
  - A nonplayer foul, unsportsmanlike foul, or dead ball foul is penalized from the succeeding spot.

#### Article 2. All-But-One Enforcement Principle

- Enforcement philosophy is based on the premise that a team is given the advantage of the distance which is gained without assistance of a foul. It is assumed that the only foul which would give this aid is a foul by the offense behind the basic spot. Therefore, all fouls but this one, which is a foul by the offense behind the basic spot, are penalized from the basic spot. This 1 foul is penalized from the spot of the foul. Exception: Roughing the Passer – See Article 4 below.

#### Article 3. 2 Types of Plays

- Whenever the ball is live, 1 of 2 types of plays is in progress, either a loose ball play or a running play. The type of play has no significance unless a foul occurs. If a foul does occur, the officials must know whether it was during a loose ball play or during a running play. This determines the basic spot of enforcement.

#### Article 4. Loose Ball Play

- A loose ball play is action during:
  - A legal forward pass.
  - A backward pass, including the snap, or fumble made by A-1 from on or behind his/her scrimmage line.
  - The run or runs which precede(s) such legal pass or fumble.
- If a foul occurs during a loose ball play, the basic enforcement spot is the previous spot, the spot of the snap. Exception: The penalty for roughing the passer on a completed forward pass will be enforced from the dead ball spot when the run ends beyond A's scrimmage line and no change of possession has occurred.

#### Article 5. Running Play

- A running play is any action which is not a loose ball play.
  - Behind the line, it includes:
    - A run which is not followed by a loose ball behind the line.
    - A run which is followed by an illegal pass from behind the line.
  - Where the player loses possession if his/her run is followed by his/her fumble into the opponent's end zone or backward pass beyond the scrimmage line is intercepted.
- If a foul occurs during a running play, the basic enforcement spot is the spot where the run ends:
  - Where the ball becomes dead if the runner does not lose possession.
  - Where the player loses possession if his/her run is followed by his/her fumble or pass.
  - At the spot of the catch when the momentum rule is in effect.

### Section 3. Special Enforcements

#### Article 1. Half the Distance

- A measurement cannot take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line. If the penalty is greater than this, the ball is placed halfway between the enforcement spot and the goal line.

#### Article 2. Safety/Goal Line

- If the offensive team throws an illegal forward pass from its end zone or commits any other foul for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from on or behind its goal line which is now the basic spot, it is a safety. For a defensive team foul, if the enforcement spot which is now the basic spot, is on or behind the offended team's goal line, any measurement is from the succeeding spot or goal line.

### Article 3. Disqualified Player

- A disqualified player must be removed.

### Article 4. Forfeiture of the Game

- A Referee's decision to forfeit a game is final.

### Article 5. Touchdown – Foul During

- If there is a foul by the scoring team (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during a down which results in a touchdown, the acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score.
- If an opponent of the scoring team commits a foul (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during a down in which a touchdown is scored, and there was not a change of possession during the down, A may accept the results of the play and then choose to have the foul enforced either on the Try, or after the Try, at the succeeding spot.
- If an opponent of the scoring team commits a foul (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during a down in which a touchdown is scored, and there was a change of possession during the down, and such foul occurs after the change of possession, the scoring team may accept the results of the play and then choose to have the foul enforced either on the Try, or after the Try, at the succeeding spot.
- If either team commits an unsportsmanlike or nonplayer foul during the down in which a touchdown is scored, the opponent may accept the results of the play and then choose to have the foul enforced either on the Try, or after the Try, at the succeeding spot.

### Article 6. Try – Foul Prior

- If after a touchdown and prior to the initial ready for play signal for the Try, either team commits any foul for which the basic spot of penalty enforcement is the succeeding spot (Try), the offended team may have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot (Try), or after the Try, at the succeeding spot.

### Article 7. Try – Foul During

- If there is a foul by A (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during a down which results in a successful Try, the acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score. If, during a successful Try, a loss of down foul by A occurs, there is no score and no replay. If there is a foul by B during a down which results in a successful Try, the penalty will be enforced at the succeeding spot. If a double foul occurs, the down shall be replayed.

### Article 8. Double Foul

- It is a double foul if both teams commit fouls (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during the same live ball period in which:
  - There is no change of team possession
  - There is a change of team possession, and the team in possession at the end of the down fouls prior to the final change of possession.
  - There is a change of team possession, and the team in possession at the end of the down accepts the penalty for its opponent's foul.
- When a double foul occurs, the penalties cancel and the down is replayed.
- Note: If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul is not prior to the final change of possession and it declined the penalty for its opponents foul(s) (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer).

#### Article 9. Multiple Live Ball Fouls

- When 2 or more live ball fouls (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) are committed during the same down by the same team, only 1 penalty may be chosen by the offended team.

#### Article 10. Dead Ball Fouls – More Than 1

- Penalties for dead ball fouls are administered separately and in the order of occurrence. Dead ball fouls are not coupled with live ball fouls or other dead ball fouls to create double or multiple fouls. If the same number of dead ball fouls are committed by both teams, and the order of occurrence cannot be determined, they will offset.

#### Article 11. Loss of Down Fouls

- Fouls by A which include loss of down are Illegal Backward Pass, Illegal Forward Pass, Illegally Secured Flag Belt, Offensive Pass Interference and Unsportsmanlike Conduct.

#### Article 12. Automatic 1<sup>st</sup> Down Fouls

- Fouls by B which give A an automatic first down are Roughing the Passer, Illegally Secured Flag Belt, Defensive Pass Interference and Unsportsmanlike Conduct.

#### Article 13. Fouls During or After Last Play of Period

- Succeeding spot fouls that occur:
  - During the last play of the game,
  - During the last play of an overtime period, or,
  - Dead ball fouls which occur after the last play of a game or overtime period

- These fouls can be carried over to overtime, unless a touchdown is scored on that play, in which case the penalty can only be enforced on the Try.