



# ***FlagFootball4Fun*** ***Flag Football***

***Official League Rules***

***Version 3.4.0***

***Revised March 28, 2012***

***(latest revisions highlighted in yellow)***

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## LATEST REVISIONS

### Clarified March 28, 2012:

#### No-Running Zones

There are five yard no-running zones preceding each end zone. When the line of scrimmage lies within one of these zones, no running plays are allowed. This means that the offense must attempt a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage. Handoffs, pitches, and laterals are **NOT** allowed, even if they lead to a pass attempt.

The one-point extra point line is within the no-running zone.

### Revised March 28, 2012:

#### **Mercy Rule**

In the event that one team has accumulated a lead of 25 points or more, the following restrictions apply:

1. When on defense, the team in the lead may not rush the quarterback, even if lined up behind the rush line (no rushing the quarterback). **When the ball leaves the quarterback's hands (for a handoff, pitch, lateral, or pass), then all defensive players immediately become eligible to rush, regardless of whether they lined up behind the rush line.**
2. When on offense, the team in the lead must run. This means they may not execute a forward pass **except when in the no-run zone.**

All other rules remain unaffected.

Mercy rules begin the instant one team gains a 25 point or more lead. Mercy rules are suspended the instant the lead falls below 25 points.

### Revised Sept. 6, 2011:

- A coin toss determines which team takes first possession of the ball. The winner of the toss has the option to begin on offense or defense. **The team that begins on offense in the first half will begin on defense in the second half.**
- The team that begins on defense is allowed to choose which goal to defend.
- Teams switch directions at the beginning of the second half. **The team that began the game on defense takes possession of the ball on their own five yard line.**

## I. **RULE REVIEW REQUEST**

We seek only best officials and take care to ensure that all rules are enforced consistently. However, officials are human and occasionally make mistakes.

In the case of a **judgment call**, the official's word is final and may not be appealed. But we have a mechanism in place to adjudicate questions of whether an official **misinterpreted or misapplied** a rule

So a head coach may request a conference with the officials to review a call if he feels it is inconsistent with the current rule book. This request must be made immediately after the play in question and prior to the time the ball once again becomes live. As soon as the ball becomes live again or the half officially ends, the call may not be changed.

To request a review, the head coach must call time out and inform the head official that he is requesting a review of the rule. If the final decision is in the coach's favor, the time out will be returned; otherwise the time out is forfeited.

If a team does not have any time outs remaining, then the coach may not request a rule review.

In response to a request, the referee shall meet with the coach on the field. Only referees, the head coach, and one assistant coach may participate in this conference.

After conferring, the referee shall issue a ruling, to be communicated to the coaching staff of both teams. The official may, at his discretion, confer with the Site Supervisor, League Director, or anyone else he finds helpful.

The final ruling is to be made by the official and may not be appealed at a later time.

## II. **PLAYERS AND ROSTERS**

### A. **Divisions**

Play is open to boys and girls of ages 5 through 16, who are organized into divisions by age:

- Age 6 and under (6U)
- Age 8 and under (8U)
- Age 10 and under (10U)
- Age 12 and under (12U)
- Age 14 and under (14U)
- Age 16 and under (16U)

League age is determined as of the cut-off date, which is **September 1** of the year in which the first game of the season takes place.

September 1, **2012** is used for Winter 2011-2012 through Fall 2012 seasons.

So for example, if a player turns 11 on September 1 or earlier, he/she must play in the 12U division. If a player turns 11 on September 2 or later, he/she may play in the 10U division.

The League may adjust the division demarcations or the date used for age determination at any time.

Proof of age must be provided upon request by the League.

#### **B. Team Rosters**

A roster of eligible players will be maintained by the League and may only be modified at its discretion. In general, roster changes will be allowed until the third game of the season, after which they are approved only under special circumstances.

Only players on the official roster may be used in games. Use of non-roster players is prohibited, and, at the League's discretion, may result in forfeit of all games in which the player participated. Use of a non-roster player also may result in disciplinary action, including suspension of the coach.

### **III. PLAYING FIELD**

As depicted in Figure 1, the field is 30 yards wide, 70 yards long and is divided lengthwise into two zones of 25 yards each, which lie between two end zones of 10 yards each. The field also includes extra point markings at 5 and 12 yards from each end zone.

At League discretion, these dimensions may be modified to better fit the space available.

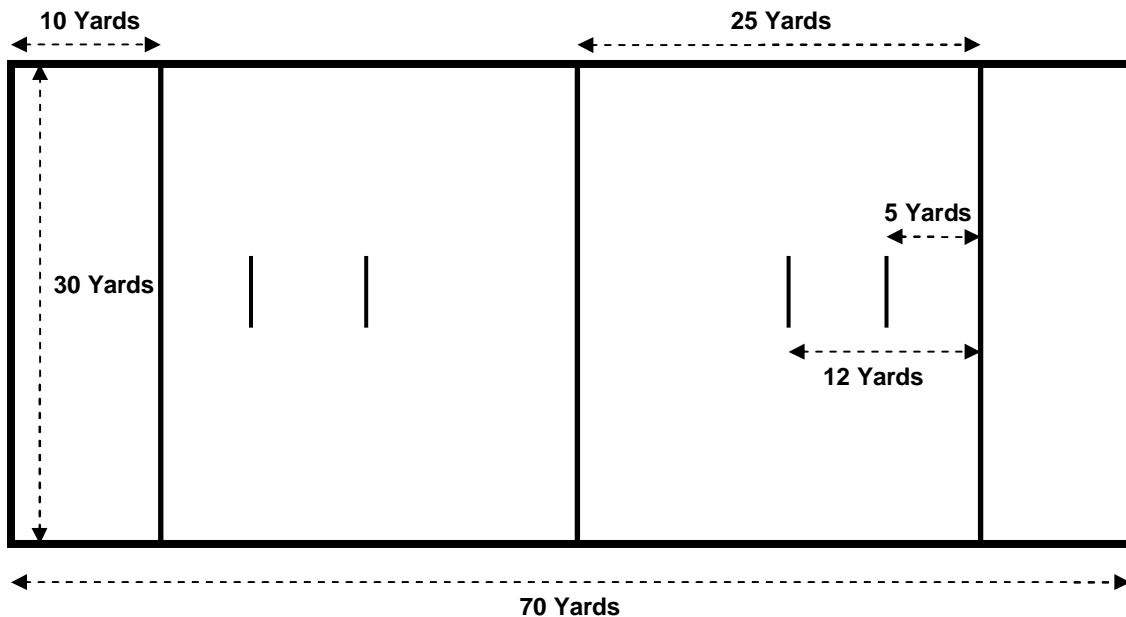


Figure 1 – Flag Football Playing Field

#### IV. EQUIPMENT

##### A. Uniforms

The uniform consists of:

- An official Flagfootball4fun flag football jersey
- Shorts or pants
- Shoes
- A protective mouth guard
- An official Flagfootball4fun flag belt

This uniform, including mouth guard and flag belt, must be worn at all times on the field of play.

The home team shall wear the lighter jersey color.

Uniforms are subject to the following restrictions:

- Jerseys must be tucked in at all times.
- Footwear must be sneakers or cleated shoes with no exposed metal parts.
- Flag belts must be of the type provided by the League
- Flag belts must remain snug and unimpeded by clothing at all times.
- Flag belts must be of a color that contrasts (in the official's judgment) with underlying clothing.
- Flag belts must be in good condition and have all streamers attached and unaltered. Belts may not be modified in any way.

## **B. Game Ball**

The game ball shall be a conventional football constructed of leather, rubber, or similar material. The ball must be inflatable and have seams.

The allowable football types vary by age group:

- 6U and 8U: K2
- 10U: TDJ or K2
- 12U: TDJ
- 14U and Up: TDY

The offensive team has the option of substituting either size ball in the 10U division (as noted above), subject to approval by the League.

## **C. Prohibited Equipment**

- Shorts or pants with pockets, belt loops, belts, or exposed draw strings
- Shoes with exposed metal
- Non-athletic shoes
- Padding of any kind, including hard surface padding such as shoulder pads, hip pads, or helmets
- Any hard substance on a player's clothing or person
- Hard casts, even if covered by soft material
- Sticky substances such as grease or glue on a player's clothing or person
- Jewelry of any kind, except for medical alert bracelets
- Barrettes or other hard objects worn on the head
- Eye glasses, unless of athletically approved construction and containing shatter-proof lenses
- Anything that the official feels could endanger or confuse players

## **V. RULES OF PLAY**

### **D. Game Timing and Flow**

- A game consists of two halves, each of 20 minutes duration, separated by a five minute halftime period.
- Each team is entitled to two timeouts per half, each of which lasts for 30 seconds.
- The play clock only stops during timeouts, half time, injuries, extended officials conferences, and at other times the officials deem appropriate.
- The offense must put the ball in play within 30 seconds of the "ready for play" whistle.
- A coin toss determines which team takes first possession of the ball. The winner of the toss has the option to begin on offense

or defense. The team that begins on offense in the first half will begin on defense in the second half.

- The team that begins on defense is allowed to choose which goal to defend.
- Teams switch directions at the beginning of the second half. The team that began the game on defense takes possession of the ball on their own five yard line.

#### **E. Playing Time**

It is the goal of the League to provide every child the opportunity to develop as an athlete. With this in mind, it is required that all players receive at least one half playing time during each game and that each player be actively utilized. Coaches are urged to abide by the spirit of this rule.

#### **F. Number of Players**

Play shall be five on five. In the event that only four players are present for a given team, they shall be allowed to play with four, although the opposing team shall still be allowed the option to play with five.

#### **G. Player Substitutions**

Players may be freely substituted after any dead ball.

#### **H. Location of Coaches**

6U and 8U: One coach per team is allowed on the field to instruct players. The coach must move at least 15 yards away before the ball is snapped.

10U and Up: One coach may step onto the field between plays to talk to players but must move to the sideline before the ball is snapped.

In all cases, it is the coaches' responsibility to avoid interfering with play. Officials may take appropriate action, including issuing a warning, re-playing a down, imposing penalties, or removing a coach from the field, if he/she believes the coaches' presence has interfered with play.

#### **I. Offense**

##### **Snapping the Ball**

The center must snap the ball between the legs and must release the ball to the quarterback for a legal play to begin. Shotgun snaps are allowed but not required.

Handoffs to the center are allowed, however he/she may not receive a handoff between the legs.

### **Number of Downs**

Each team will have three downs to advance the ball across the first down marker or into the opposing end zone. After a team crosses the first down marker, it receives three more downs. If the offense fails to get a first down or touchdown, then possession passes to the opposite team on their own five yard line.

### **Ball Position**

The location of the runner's front foot (not the ball) at the end of the play determines where the ball is to be spotted.

### **Running**

The player who receives the snap (the quarterback) may not run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage until it has been given to another player. After the ball has been passed, handed off, or pitched to another player, then this restriction no longer applies; the quarterback becomes eligible to run, pass, or receive the ball.

Spin moves are allowed.

It is the ball carrier's responsibility to avoid colliding with defenders that lie in his/her path. Unintentional contact shall not be penalized, provided the ball carrier makes an effort to avoid it. Failure to attempt to avoid contact with a defender (charging) may be penalized, even if it does not result in a collision.

### **No-Running Zones**

There are five yard no-running zones preceding each end zone. When the line of scrimmage lies within one of these zones, no running plays are allowed. This means that the offense must attempt a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage. Handoffs, pitches, and laterals are **NOT** allowed, even if they lead to a pass attempt.

The one-point extra point line is within the no-running zone.

### **Laterals**

Laterals are allowed but may occur only behind the line of scrimmage.

There is no limit to the number of laterals that may occur, provided they all occur behind the line of scrimmage.

### **Handoffs**

Handoffs may occur only behind the line of scrimmage.

There is no limit on the number of handoffs that may occur during a given play. Handoffs may be forward or backward and do not limit the offense's option to throw a subsequent forward pass.

### **Seven Second Rule**

After the ball is snapped, the quarterback has seven seconds to pass, handoff, or pitch the ball. After this time expires, the ball shall be returned to the line of scrimmage and the down shall be lost.

As soon as the quarterback no longer holds the ball, the seven second rule ceases to apply, even if the quarterback gains possession of the ball again.

### **Passing**

No more than one forward pass is allowed on the same play.

All players (including the quarterback) are eligible receivers.

### **Blocking**

Limited blocking is allowed only at the line of scrimmage. Blockers must keep their hands behind their backs at all times.

Once a play goes beyond the line of scrimmage, no blocking of any kind is allowed.

### **Receiving**

A completion results when the receiver has control of the ball with at least one foot in bounds.

If a receiver catches a pass while not wearing a flag belt, the ball shall be down at the point of the catch.

### **Motion**

No more than one player at a time is allowed to be in motion, and a player in motion may not move toward the line of scrimmage until the ball is snapped.

### **Restrictions**

- Ball carriers are prohibited from using hands, arms, or the ball to impede access to the flag belt.
- The ball carrier shall not lower his/her head to charge or run into a defensive player.
- No intentional contact of any kind is allowed. This includes charging or running directly into a defensive player or stiff-arming.
- The ball carrier is not allowed to dive. If he/she dives into the end zone, it is not a score; a diving penalty shall be imposed from the goal line.

## **J. Defense**

### **Flag Pulling**

- To stop the ball carrier, the defensive player must remove the flag belt or force (without contact) him/her out of bounds.
- No intentional contact is allowed. This includes tackling, pushing, grasping, and bumping. This also includes touching the face or head in any way or contacting a passer's arm or the ball while he/she is holding the ball.
- Incidental contact to the ball carrier's body while reaching for the flag belt is not a violation.
- If a ball carrier's flag falls off without being touched, he/she is down at the spot it touched the ground.

### **Rushing**

Any defensive player is eligible to rush the quarterback if he/she is behind the rushing line when the ball is snapped. The rushing line is marked by the official and is seven yards from the line of scrimmage. This seven-yard distance applies even if the first down line or goal line is less than seven yards from the line of scrimmage.

Any number of players may rush the quarterback, provided they comply with the listed restrictions.

When the ball leaves the quarterback's hands (for a handoff, pitch, lateral, or pass), then all defensive players immediately become eligible to rush, regardless of whether they lined up behind the rush line.

## **K. Change of Possession**

A team failing to advance beyond the first down marker or into the end zone after three downs loses possession of the ball. The opposing team takes possession on its own five yard line.

An intercepted pass results in a change of possession but may not be returned. The line of scrimmage then moves to the point at which the ball was intercepted.

## **L. Dead Ball**

The ball shall be declared dead when:

- The ball touches the ground
- Any part of the ball carrier other than hands or feet touches the ground
- A run is attempted from a no-running zone
- The ball carrier's flag belt falls off or is removed
- The ball carrier scores
- The ball carrier steps out of bounds

- The seven second clock expires

### M. Score Values

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Point after touchdown
  - From 5 yards: 1 point
  - From 12 yards: 2 points
- Safety: 2 points

### N. Mercy Rule

In the event that one team has accumulated a lead of 25 points or more, the following restrictions apply:

1. When on defense, the team in the lead may not rush the quarterback, even if lined up behind the rush line (no rushing the quarterback). **When the ball leaves the quarterback's hands (for a handoff, pitch, lateral, or pass), then all defensive players immediately become eligible to rush, regardless of whether they lined up behind the rush line.**
2. When on offense, the team in the lead must run. This means they may not execute a forward pass **except when in the no-run zone.**

All other rules remain unaffected.

Mercy rules begin the instant one team gains a 25 point or more lead. Mercy rules are suspended the instant the lead falls below 25 points.

### O. Tiebreaker

If a game is tied at the end of the second half, play transitions to a tiebreaker period. A coin toss is used to determine ball possession and direction in the same way as at the beginning of the game. There will be only one coin toss during tiebreaker play. If additional periods are played, teams shall alternate possession. Team direction does not change between tiebreaker periods.

Each team starts with a first and goal at the mid-field line, and play proceeds normally until the team scores or is stopped. The other team then receives the same opportunity.

A tiebreaker period consists of one possession by each team. If the score is still tied after the first overtime period, play proceeds to a second period. If the score is still tied after the second overtime period, then:

- If a regular season game, then it is ruled a tie.
- If a playoff game, play continues until a winner is determined.

Each team may call one time-out during a tiebreaker period.

## **P. Ejections**

At the official's discretion, a player may be ejected from the field for unsportsmanlike conduct or any flagrant violation of the rules. To eject a player, the official shall notify the coach, who is responsible for removing the player within two minutes to avoid a forfeit.

Any player ejected may be put on probation with possible suspension, depending upon the severity of incident. The League shall have full discretion when imposing penalties.

Our league is intended to provide a family-oriented environment for the enjoyment of children. All coaches, players, and spectators are expected to show good sportsmanship at all times. The League, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to eject, suspend, or dismiss anyone for any inappropriate behavior.

## **Q. Forfeits**

If a team cannot field at least four players, the game will be forfeit.

If a team is more than 10 minutes late for their game start time, the game will be forfeit.

The score of a forfeited game shall be 10-0.

## **R. Penalties**

All procedural penalties are five yards. All other penalties are ten yards. Some infractions may carry additional penalties, including loss of down, automatic first down, or ejection.

Penalties are either imposed from the basic spot or from the point at which the foul occurred.

For fouls that occur before or during (prior to the catch) a legal forward pass, the basic spot is the original line of scrimmage. Otherwise, the basic spot is the point at which the ball would be spotted if no penalty had occurred.

The offended team always has the option to decline. When the penalty is greater than the distance to the goal line, it shall be half the distance to the goal line.

A period of play cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense chooses to decline it. In the event of a defensive penalty that is not declined, the offense receives another play (along with an extra point attempt, if they score).

### **Loss of 5 Yards**

- Delay of Game
- Encroachment
- False Start
- Illegal Motion
- Attempting to Run From a No-running Zone
- Illegally Rushing the Quarterback
- Offensive Pass Interference (Loss of Down)
- Defensive Pass Interference (Automatic First Down)
- Roughing the Passer
- Removing Receiver's Flag Belt Before he/she Contacts the Ball
- Tackling, Hitting, or Shoving the Ball Carrier
- Obstructing or Holding the Ball Carrier
- Interference by a Coach on the Field

### **Loss of 10 Yards from Basic Spot**

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct (Automatic First Down)
  - Spiking, Kicking, or Inappropriately Throwing the Ball
  - Spiking or Throwing Flag
  - Using Profanity, Taunting, or Using Insulting or Vulgar Language or Gestures
  - Disrespectfully Addressing any Person
  - Holding an Unauthorized Conference or Being on the Field Illegally
  - Stripping or Attempting to Strip the Ball
  - Intentionally Contacting an Official
  - Fighting
- Too Many Players on the Field
- Equipment Violation
- Ejected Player Entering Game
- Illegal Offensive Blocking

### **Loss of 10 Yards from Point-Of-Foul (Do Not Repeat Down)**

- Flag Guarding
- Stiff Arming
- Diving by the Ball Carrier
- Failure to Attempt to Avoid Defender by the Ball Carrier (Charging)

### **Possible Ejection (at Official's Discretion) in Addition to Penalty**

- Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Flagrant Personal Fouls (especially Tackling, Pass Interference, and Charging)
- Intentionally Tampering with Equipment