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**Rule Book**

**Spiked Flag Football Rules**

Spiked Flag Football is a Youth Flag Football League that consists only of 5 v 5 Player Format. The Age Division you fall in, is the age you are as of January 1st of that year.This is a non contact sport and all teams are Co-Ed.

**Field of Play:**

1. The Field of Play is 66 Yards Long (Consisting of two 25 Yard Halves and two 8 Yard End Zones. All fields will have a width of 25 Yards.
2. On Both sides of the field, there will be one pass only zone, which will be from the opponents goal line to the opponents 5 yard line.
3. Pylons will mark the 4 corners of each end zone. The 5, 10 and 15 yard line will on both sidelines will either be marked by a colored cone or by a Conversion Marker. The midfield line will also be marked by a cone.
4. All lines must be marked with a material that is not harmful to a person’s eyes or skin.
5. All benches and any other Hazards must be at least 10 yards from the edge of the Playing surface to give players adequate room to stop safely.
6. The playing surface shall consist of grass or artificial turf.
7. All markings or decorations on the field must not hinder the players.
8. No additional markings are required on a field

**The Ball:**

1. Spiked Flag Football provides an appropriately sized ball to each coach at the beginning of the season and Recommends using that ball in all games, but does not require it.
2. Spiked Flag Football required Sizes by Age:
3. 6U – Peewee Football – Size 5
4. 8U – Peewee Football – Size 5
5. 10U – Junior Football – Size 6
6. 12U – Youth Football – Size 7
7. 14U – Youth Football – Size 7

 If you are not using a Spiked Flag Football, the ball needs to clearly state on it one of two things, the Size listed above in section 2, or it needs to clearly the list the age/division ON THE BALL. For Example if using a ball for 6U, the ball needs to state on it, 6U.

**Rosters:**

Spiked Flag Football only has a 5 vs. 5 Format - (4 - 15 years old)

1. Each team will have 5 Players on the field; 4 players are acceptable, and the opposing team can play with 4 or 5 when the opposing team has 4 players.
2. A minimum 4 Players are required to start a game. If a team is playing with 4 players and one is hurt and cannot continue, the game will move to a forfeit.
3. Roster sizes are a maximum of 10 Players.

**Uniforms:**

1. Player jerseys must have numbers on the back of shirts. All Jerseys will be supplied by Spiked Flag Football. The Jersey must be worn on top of any other clothing and all clothing must be clearly tucked in. Jerseys all also must be the same color and match so there is no confusion.
2. If a player’s jersey or under clothing becomes untucked and is not fixed, the Referee will notify the player or coach and the Referee is allowed to call that player down at the spot where they touch the ball if it is not fixed after a warning.
3. Players must wear shorts or pants with no pockets, or pockets that are zipped up.
4. Face coverings, billed hats & visors are not allowed. Beanies can be worn during cold weather. And billed hats or visors are allowed if worn backward.
5. Sunglasses are allowed
6. All players are required to wear a mouthpiece.

**Flags and Belts:**

1. Flags must be a minimum of 15” in length.
2. Two sets of Poppers on a flag belt are NOT allowed!
3. Flags must be aligned with the player's hips.
4. Flag Plugs/poppers must be facing out, not in towards the body.
5. Flags in no way can match the players shorts or pants. For Example, If a player has black pants on and wears black flags, they will be asked to remove them before re entering the game. This will be at the Referees discretion.
6. Flags off the Hips – If the flags come off the hips during an attempted pull or during a run, that player is allowed to continue the run until a flag is pulled. If a player starts a play with the flags not squarely on the hips then that player is ruled down when that player touches the ball.
7. If a player is seen moving the flags off the hips at the start of a play or in between plays, that player is given one warning and then will be disqualified.
8. Both Poppers and plugs on the flag belt need to be the same color!

**GamePlay**

**Formations:**

1. The offense can line up in any formation, with any number of players on the LOS or in the backfield. Players on the line of scrimmage must have at least 3 ft between each player, including the center (no bunch formations). Must be 1 Yard behind center as well to be considered off the line
2. Any player in the backfield may take a handoff from the quarterback; the center is the only person who cannot take a direct handoff from the quarterback. The center is not allowed to touch the ball first on a run; he may take a handoff from another player who gets a handoff from the quarterback first.
3. The ball must be snapped between the center's legs.
4. A blitzer can intercept a shotgun snap from a center to a QB
5. There is no required formation for the defense (Except at 6U).

**Scoring:**

1. Touchdowns are worth 6 points.
2. Conversions: After a touchdown is scored, the ball will be spotted in the middle of the field, and the scoring team will have the opportunity to earn extra points via a conversion. The head coach has only 10 seconds to make a decision. Once a coach has made a decision and the ball has been spotted, the only way to change the conversion point value would be to call a timeout.

Conversion Point Values: 5-yard line = 1 point 10-yard line = 2 points 15-yard line = 3 points.

1. A safety will earn 2 points for the defense if they pull an offensive player’s flag in his own end zone while the offensive player has possession of the ball or if a quarterback is in the end zone. Flag guarding in the end zone also results in a safety. A center snap that lands in the end zone will result in a safety.
2. If the defense intercepts the ball and returns it to the opposing end zone during a conversion, they will be awarded 2 points.
3. The clock will always stop after a conversion and will restart when the receiving team touches the ball on a throw off.

**Pass Only Zones:**

 Each side of the field will have a pass only zone. When the offensive team gets within 5 yards of the opposing team's goal line, that area will be deemed pass only and the offense can only execute forward pass plays. The offense will still be allowed to run a hand off or a lateral as long as they pass the ball forward before they cross the line of scrimmage. These rules are the same for all 1 PT conversions as well which start directly on the 5 yard line. Int his area of play, an offense can throw behind the line of scrimmage and have it deemed a Pass as long as the pass is thrown forward!

 **Conversion Penalties:**

1. If the Defense commits any penalty during a failed conversion NOT starting at the 5-yard line (before a turnover) - the Conversion will be replayed with the ball spotted at the next closest Conversion spot while keeping the same point value. EXAMPLE: A defensive penalty on a failed 3-point conversion will result in a replay of the 3-point conversion from the 10-yard line. The subsequent defensive penalty would result in a 3-point conversion from the 5-yard line, and a subsequent defensive penalty would result in 3 points awarded to the offense.
2. If the Defense commits any penalty on a Conversion that starts at the 5-yard line (prior to a turnover) - the Conversion will be ruled successful.
3. Any penalty committed by the converting team during a defensive return will result in the defensive team being awarded the 2 Points that they would have gotten had they returned the ball for a touchdown. This only applies to a turnover on a conversion. The ball would still go to a throw off after that.
4. Any penalty by the converting team before a turnover will result in a failed conversion.

**Time:**

1. Each game will be 40 minutes long, consisting of two (2) 20-minute halves. 6U Level will have two 18 Minute Halves. Tournament Halves will be 10 Minutes each half.
2. Running time: the game will be played under running time. The game clock will stop only for injuries, referee timeouts and coaches timeouts. Running time will be suspended in the last 1 minute of the second half where the game will go to a Pro Style Clock.
3. Pro Style Clock: the last 1 minute of the second half will be played under Pro Clock Rules. See Below.
4. Clock runs - the game clock will continue to run and the Pro Clock will be Ignored in both the first and second half if the score difference exceeds 18 points during the last minute of the game.
5. On a 4th down, the offensive coach has 10 seconds to decide whether to punt or go for it. If they decide to go for it, the only way to change that decision is to call a timeout. If they decide to punt, change of possession occurs immediately and the decision cannot be reversed.

 **Clock:**

1. The clock will restart on the throw-off after a receiving person in the field of play touches the ball; if a receiving player does not touch the ball, the clock will start on the snap of the next play.
2. During running time, the game clock will stop at the beginning of all referee time-outs and resume when the referee starts the play clock
3. Pro Style Clock Last Minute of the second half
4. The Game Clock will stop for a 1-minute warning in the second half of football no matter what.
5. Pro Style Time will then begin as long as the score is within 18 points, the game clock will stop if any of the following conditions are met:
6. A player in possession of the ball steps out of bounds.
7. An attempted pass is incomplete.
8. Change of possession.
9. Scoring play. (Clock will stay stopped through conversion and will not start again until the ball is touched during the following play.)
10. If a player clocks or spikes the ball (would be incomplete pass and is allowed)
11. Any Penalty.
12. A team or referee timeout.
13. If a penalty is declined inside the final minute of a half, the game clock will start on the ready-for-play whistle, unless the play prior called for a stoppage, with an out of bounds, incompletion or timeout.

**Timeouts:**

1. Time Out Length
	1. referee: 30 seconds or 1 minute
	2. team: 1 minute unless the referee chooses to extend
	3. between halves: 1 minute
	4. between regulation and overtime (or subsequent overtimes): 1 minute.
2. Time outs not called in the first half will not carry over to the second half.
3. Time outs may be called by a player on the field and/or a designated sideline coach.
4. A team cannot call two consecutive timeouts without running a play. However, each team may call one time out before the same play.
5. During the entire overtime, Each Team will get 1 Timeout lasting 30 seconds.
6. Injury Time Outs: Will last a minimum of 1 minute and will be called by the referee if they perceive that a player requires medical assistance.
7. Injury During Running Time: An injured player must leave the field of play, or their team forfeits one of their time outs.
8. Injury During Pro Clock: The injured player’s team will automatically forfeit a time out unless the injury resulted from an act that resulted in a penalty to the other team. In controlled time, if the injured player's team has no timeouts remaining, the opposing team can run the game clock for 10 seconds, and the game clock will restart on the ready for play whistle.

**The Play Clock:**

1. Will start when the Referee sounds the ready for play whistle or places the ball down for play, and the offense will have 30 seconds to start a new play. Failure to start a new play in the allotted time will result in a penalty for delay of game, resulting in loss of down.
2. 10-Second Run-off: During Pro Clock time, any penalty committed that stops the clock will be subject to a 10-second run-off at the option of the non-offending team. If the 10-second run-off is accepted, the game clock will start on the Referee's ready for play whistle. If the Game Clock was stopped at the time of the penalty, there is no runoff, and the Game Clock will start at the ready for play whistle. If less than 10 seconds remain on the Game Clock and a run-off occurs, the game will be over.

**Overtime:**

If the game's score is tied after two halves, Overtime will be played.

1. During overtime, Each Team will get 1 Timeout lasting 30 seconds.
2. The game clock will be turned off, and each team will have one possession to score a conversion from their opponent’s 5, 10, or 15-yard line.
3. A conversion from the 5-yard line is worth 1 point. A conversion from the 10-yard line is worth 2 points. A conversion from the 3-yard line is worth 3 points.
4. The process is repeated if the score is tied after the first overtime attempt.
5. Teams can go for 1, 2, or 3 points on every overtime possession. Whatever they choose.
6. Both Teams will defend the End Zone that was the target of the game’s initial throw-off.
7. Each team will receive 1 Blitz for the entire overtime period.
8. There will be a coin toss to decide which team gets the ball first. Each overtime whoever is on offense first will switch.

The team leading at the conclusion of overtime wins the game. If the score is tied at the end of the first overtime period, an additional overtime period will be played. After the second overtime period, if a winner has not been determined, each overtime period will consist of one conversion attempt of any value by each team until there is a winner. The alternating choice of possession order will continue.

**Pre Game:**

1. Before the Game Begins, both teams will line up for a referee and will be checked that their attire is correct. Kids will need to have and show a mouthguard, show that their jerseys are fully tucked in, and that their flag belt poppers are pointed out, not in and match colors. Flags must also be pulled out to start each game by the player in front of the ref!
2. Before the start time of the game, each team will send the team captain to the center of the field for a coin toss.
3. The away team chooses heads or tails before the referee tosses the coin into the air.
4. The team winning the coin toss can choose if they want to start the game by receiving or executing a Throw-Off.
5. The team that receives the First Half Throw-Off will Throw-Off to start the Second Half.
6. The team that loses the coin toss chooses which Goal Line they would like to defend on the initial possession.
7. The Second Half Throw-Off will be in the opposite direction as the First Half Throw-Off, in other words the teams will switch direction.

**The Throw Off:**

1. Before the Throw-Off, the receiving team can line up in any formation so long as none of their players are across Midfield before the ball is thrown.
2. Except for the Thrower, the Throwing Team is not permitted to run up as the ball is thrown and must keep one foot on the throw yard line until the ball is released. They cannot move forward until the ball leaves the Throwers hand or its ruled Offside.
3. The Throw-Off will occur at the beginning of the 1st and 2nd halves and after any Touchdown or Safety (Unless the team attempts an Onside Play).
4. A player from the Throwing Team will initiate a Throw-Off by throwing the ball from behind his team's designated yard line based on division. The Game Clock will be re-started, if necessary, when the receiving team touches the ball.
5. Throw-Off Yard Lines:

15U: Throw off from the 5-yard line

12U: Throw off from the 10-yard line

10U: Throw off from the 15-yard line

8U: Throw off from the midfield line

6U: The offense will start at the 5-yard line (no Throw-Offs)

1. The receiving team, either by catching the ball in the air or picking it up off of the ground, may advance any throw-off. They can also lateral the ball once backwards during the return, but cannot run any hand offs, the ball needs to be lateraled.
2. If the ball is caught by the receiving team and the receiving player elects to place a knee on the ground in the receiving teams end zone, or the ball bounces from the end zone beyond any sideline or the end line, the receiving team will start with a first down at its 5-yard line. They must cross the 25-yard line to receive a new set of downs. If the receiving team fails to pass the 25-yard line, they will not receive a new set of downs unless they can pass midfield. This remains even after a penalty that results in an automatic first down or free down.
3. If the throw-off initially hits the ground before the receiving teams goal line, the ball may either be picked up and returned by the receiving team or:
	1. The ball can be downed by the Throwing team. Inside the end zone will result in a touchback and the receiving team will start at the 5 yard line. Outside of the end zone, if the ball is down, The receiving team will start right at that point.
4. Once the throw-off is downed by the throwing team, the result is a dead ball with the ball spotted where it was first touched.
5. If the receiving team muffs the ball on a fly or bounce, the ball will be spotted where it first made contact with the receiving team. And The ball is considered dead right at that moment and cannot be recovered or advanced by either team.
6. If a player makes a catch outside the endzone and runs into the endzone, and his flag is pulled, thats a safety.
7. If the throwing team throws the ball out of bounds and is untouched by the receiving team, the receiving team will be awarded the ball at the opposing team's 15-yard line. If the ball goes out of the endzone (back or side), it is a touchback, and the ball will be placed on the receiving team's 5-yard line.
8. **After a Safety:** If a team surrenders a Safety, the teams switch sides of the field, and the team that surrendered the Safety must execute a Throw-Off from the 5-yard line.
9. **Onside Play:** Instead of a Throw-Off, the Throwing Team can elect an optional play called an Onside Play. An Onside Play is equivalent to a Fourth Down play with Midfield as the line to gain for the Offensive Team and would start at the Throwing Teams 5-yard Line. There is no onside play allowed unless behind in the 2nd half in the last minute of the game. You would need to be within 18 points, (one possession) to go for an onside play.

**Set of Downs:**

1. The Offense will have one Set of Downs to advance the ball from their own half of the field to their opponents. Once the Offense advances the ball into their opponents side of the field they will receive a new Set of Downs.
2. A Set of Downs is considered 4 Plays.
3. After the throw-off, the Offense must cross the 25-yard line to receive a new Set of Downs unless the return passes Midfield, in which case the team will have 4 downs to score.
4. Spotting the Ball: Referees will do their best to spot the ball in the middle of the field each play.

**Offense:**

1. The first player to receive the snap from the center is considered the quarterback for that play.
2. This player has a maximum of 6 seconds to release the ball by executing a forward pass, handoff, pitch, or run if they are blitzed.
3. The 6 second clock is turned off when the quarterback releases the ball forward or backwards or if the quarterback crosses the line of scrimmage when blitzed.
4. Failure to do so will result in a dead ball ending the play, and will be considered a coverage sack. The ball will be marked to start the next play where the quarterback was holding the ball at the time of the whistle. Please note, the referee will not say 6, the referee will count to 5 and then blow the whistle at the 6.
5. There is no intentional grounding, so the QB can get rid of the ball into the ground or out of bounds before the 6 second clock expires.
6. **QB Advance:** the quarterback is not allowed to advance the ball past the line of scrimmage without another offensive player having possession of the ball first. The exception is if a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage (immediate Blitz or 3 Second Blitz) The QB can never advance the ball past the LoS when in the Pass Only zone.
7. **Motion:** The Offense is allowed to have 1 player in motion at any time, including when the ball is snapped, so long as that player's motion is not toward the Line of Scrimmage.
8. **Eligible Receivers:** All offensive players are eligible receivers.
9. **Diving:** An offensive player may dive to catch a ball, but they can not dive forward to advance the ball once they have possession. The ball will be spotted where the offensive player initiated the dive.
10. **Falling on the Ground:** regardless of whether it was due to incidental contact from other players, a player in possession of the ball and on the ground is considered down and the possession over.
11. **QB Throw –** A Quarterback is not considered to be passed the line of scrimmage until his entire body has passed the line of scrimmage. Until that point they are eligible to throw the ball down field. Once their entire body has passed the line, it will be flagged as an illegal run.

**Laterals:**

1. On Throw-Offs, one (1) lateral is allowed during the receiving team’s return.
2. On Scrimmage Plays, one Lateral per team per play is allowed downfield, two behind the line of scrimmage.
3. After the snap, the first handoff behind the line of scrimmage from the QB to another player will not be considered a lateral unless the ball is tossed.
4. Forward passes are permitted after handoffs and laterals as long as the ball and the passer have not crossed the Line of Scrimmage and there have not been any forward passes already.
5. Laterals can be intercepted and advanced by the defense.

**Punting:**

1. Teams can punt the ball on 4th down regardless of position on the field.
2. If a team elects to punt on Fourth Down, they are electing to forfeit the play, and the opposing team will start at their 5-yard line.
3. Teams can punt on either side of the field if they wish.

**Defense:**

1. There is no required formation for the Defense except at the 6U Level. At 6U Level, the defense must start 5 yards off the line of scrimmage but can move forward as soon as the ball is hiked. (Not For Tournament play)
2. There is no tackling or pushing allowed in flag football. A defensive player must pull a flag from the offensive player in possession of the ball to end the play.
3. Defensive players may dive to pull flags or attempt to catch the ball.
4. Early Flag Pull: If a Defensive Player removes an Offensive Players flag before that player possesses the ball, the Referee should say “Early Pull,” and play continues. The defense will still need to pull a flag to end the Play. (See Unsportsmanlike Conduct for Additional rules.)
5. A defensive player is only allowed to cross the line of scrimmage under the following circumstances:
	1. Executing a blitz. A blitz occurs when a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the 6 Second Clock reaches 3 seconds.
	2. Crossing the line of scrimmage when the 6 second clock count reaches 3 seconds.
	3. If the ball is handed off or lateraled by the QB.
6. Each Defensive Team can Blitz 2 times in each Half. If there is an offensive penalty when a blitz is used, the defense will not be charged a blitz; if there is a defensive penalty when a blitz is used, the defense will still be charged their blitz.
7. Illegal Blitz: If the Defense is not Blitzing, they must wait 3 seconds to cross the line of Scrimmage. An encroachment or Illegal Blitz penalty occurs when a team crosses the Line of Scrimmage before 3 seconds with no remaining Blitzes.

This will Result in an automatic first down or the non-offending team can choose to decline the penalty and take the result of the play instead.

1. Offsides – This is when a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the snap. This can be from an attempted blitz or from a substitution. It does not matter if the player gets back on side before the snap, the penalty has already occurred and a flag should be thrown right away.

The play continues – The non-offending team can choose to keep the result of the play or replay the down. Either way the defense loses a blitz on the play. If the play is blown dead, it is simply a replay of the down but the defense loses a blitz.

**Possession:**

1. A Catch: A catch is defined as an instance where a player gains control of a forward pass by:
	1. securing control of the ball in their hands or arms before the ball touches the ground
	2. one foot touches the ground inbounds while the ball is secure in their hands and/or arms
	3. After (a) and (b) have been fulfilled, performs any act common to the game (e.g., tuck the ball away, extend it forward, take an additional step, turn upfield, or avoid an opponent), or maintain control of the ball long enough to do so.
	4. If another part of the player’s body hits the ground before his feet (not including hands), then the initial contact with the ground from that body part must be completely inbounds.
2. As soon as the player is ruled out of bounds, the play is over, and a catch or interception shall be ruled complete if the above requirements are met.
3. Simultaneous possession of a forward pass will be ruled to be a catch for the offense regardless of the order of whose feet touch the ground first. Both players must complete the catch in bounds; otherwise, the pass will be ruled incomplete.
4. If one player controls the ball in their hands before another player, whether in the air or on the ground, the catch will not be considered simultaneous possession.

**Penalties & Remedies:**

If not implicitly or explicitly stated below, all penalties can be declined by the non-offending team, and the result of the play will stand. If one team commits multiple penalties on the same play and the other team commits zero, the non-offending team can pick which penalty to enforce. All penalties that occur on an interception, throw-off, or punt return by the return team will result in first down as a spot foul.

**Blocking:**

Blocking is defined as an offensive player forcing a defensive player to change his position on the field through physical contact initiated by the offensive players hands, arms, shoulders, or head. Holding, defined as an offensive player grabbing or holding onto a defensive player to impede his motion, is also considered illegal blocking. A pick set before possession of the ball by a receiver or prior to the quarterbacks crossing the line of scrimmage in possession of the ball will be treated as a block. Once a player with the ball crosses the line of scrimmage and can no longer throw, all other players must stand still or stay behind the runner, they cannot run down field ahead of the player. If they are standing still ahead of the runner, they cannot be called for a pick.

1. The remedy is a 5 yard penalty at the spot of the foul. At the end of the play the ball will be brought back to the spot of the foul and stepped out 5 yards by the ref.
2. At the Referee’s discretion, if egregious, a Player committing a Block may be sent off the field, thus putting his team a Man Down for 2 plays.

**Charging:**

Charging occurs when an offensive player running with the ball makes significant physical contact with a defensive player who has established a stationary position on the field, where the offensive player has the opportunity to recognize that the defensive player has established position. Generally, an offensive player running with the ball has the right of way and will not be called for charging if the defensive player is in motion or established his position in a manner that gives the offensive player no opportunity to avoid contact.

1. The remedy for charging is that the ball will be dead at the point of the charge along with an additional 5 yards back.
2. A referee can also send a player off the field, putting his team a man down for 2 plays
3. If an offensive player also jumps into a defensive player who has established position and raises his knee into that player, that player should automatically be sent off for 2 plays.

**Defensive Holding:**

Defensive Holding occurs when a Defensive Player holds onto a part of the body or uniform of a ball carrier where the Offensive Player's progress is impeded in a meaningful way.

1. The remedy is an automatic First Down at the spot of the Foul.

\*This does not include pulling a player down by the shorts if the defender has a flag in their hands. That would be considered incidental and the player was clearly going for and got the flag and would not be considered holding.

**Intentional Defensive Holding:**

It occurs when a Defensive Player holds onto a part of the body or uniform of a Free Runner. A Free Runner has possession of the football with no defenders in front of him and would be deemed likely by the Officials to have scored in the absence of the tackle or intentional defensive hold.

1. This will follow the same rules as Tackling a last man (free runner) and be considered a touchdown.

**Defensive Pass Interference (DPI):**

DPI occurs when bodily contact initiated by a Defensive Player prevents an Offensive Player from attempting to catch a likely catchable Pass.

1. DPI can also occur when a defensive player holds onto a part of the body or uniform of an offensive player 5 yards or more from the line of scrimmage before a pass is thrown, where the offensive players progress is impeded in a meaningful way.
2. DPI also occurs when a defensive player forces an offensive player out of bounds before a pass is thrown where the offensive player would otherwise be deemed ineligible.
3. DPI penalties in the field of play – are an automatic 1st down at the spot of the foul.
4. DPI penalties in the End Zone - the offense is awarded first down at the opposing 2-yard line or the previous line of scrimmage, whichever is closer to the end zone.
5. If the pass is uncatchable, no penalty will be called unless the referee is calling the penalty for holding reasons.

**Delay of Game:**

Delay of Game occurs if the Offense does not start a new play before the Play Clock expires. The offense has 30 Seconds (35 seconds at 6U) to run a play once the ball is spotted. All Spiked Fields have scoreboards with clocks that the referees will use.

1. On a scrimmage play - the remedy is loss of down.
2. On a throw-off – The Throwing team is penalized 5 Yards

**False Start:**

1. If any offensive team member crosses the line of scrimmage or moves after being set before the ball is snapped, it is a dead ball, and the offense is penalized with a 5 yard penalty and replay of the down. This also applies to onside plays.

**Offsides**

An offside violation occurs when:

1. Throwing teams crossing the line of scrimmage before a throw-off or punt. On a throw-off or punt, the receiving team will have the option of keeping the result of the play or having the throwing team throw off again from 5 yards further back!
2. OffSides: Offsides – This is when a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the snap. This can be from an attempted blitz or from a substitution. It does not matter if the player gets back on side before the snap, the penalty has already occurred and a flag should be thrown right away.

The play continues – The non-offending team can choose to keep the result of the play or replay the down. Either way the defense loses a blitz on the play. If the play is blown dead by a ref by accident, it is simply a replay of the down but the defense loses a blitz. If they didn’t have any blitzes, then see Illegal Blitz, and its an automatic first down.

**Flag Delay:**

The Defender who pulls a flag must immediately drop it on the ground or hand it to an Official or the Player it was pulled from.

1. If the Defensive Player carries the flag away or throws the flag away from the Offensive Player and causes an undue delay of the game, the Officials may reset the Game and Play Clocks accordingly.
2. An Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty may also be called on the Defense, with the appropriate remedy enforced. This would be after a warning was given first.

**Flag-Guarding:**

Flag-Guarding is deemed to have occurred when an offensive player in possession of The ball creates contact with a defensive player using his hands, arms, elbows, or the ball to prevent a defensive player from pulling his flag.

1. The remedy for Flag-Guarding is a 5 yard penalty at the spot of the foul.
2. Flag-guarding after an interception or on a return will result in the ball being spotted where the infraction occurred and then stepped back 5 yards.
3. Flag-guarding on fourth down will result in a spot foul and a turnover on downs.

**Flag Tampering:**

1. Any attempt to tamper with Flags that would make them more difficult to pull, including but not limited to using adhesives, knots, and stronger magnets, will result in an automatic game Disqualification

**Illegal Contact by the Offense:**

Illegal contact occurs when an offensive player, running a passing route, uses his hands, arms, or shoulders to meaningfully alter the position or direction of the defender to gain an advantage.

1. The remedy for illegal contact by the offense is loss of down at the previous spot.

**Illegal Lateral:**

A Lateral that either goes forward or is the second Lateral on a scrimmage play ends that play.

1. After any Illegal Lateral that travels backward and hits the ground or is caught, the ball will be spotted where it hits the ground or is caught.
2. An Illegal Lateral that travels forward will be spotted where the ball was released.
3. An exception is on Throw-Offs, where the Receiving Team is allowed one Lateral, and this penalty will be enforced on the second Lateral. The Play will be blown dead once possessed by the offense, or it hits the ground after an Illegal Lateral.

**Illegal Forward pass:**

Any forward pass thrown where the entire body of the passer has been beyond the line of scrimmage within the down.

1. The Play will continue and a flag will be thrown. Depending on the result of the play, the Defense can accept the penalty, which will be loss of down and the ball put back at the original line of scrimmage or they can decline the penalty. (an interception will count)

**Illegal Motion**

Illegal motion is any motion by an offensive player behind the line of scrimmage that moves toward their line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped, or more than 1 player is in legal motion. This results in a dead ball, and play is stopped.

1. The remedy for illegal motion is loss of down

**Illegal Quarterback Runs:**

An Illegal Quarterback Run takes place if the Quarterback runs across the Line of Scrimmage before any Defensive Players cross the Line of Scrimmage or a run in a pass only zone.

1. The remedy for an Illegal Quarterback Run is Loss of Down and any yardage gained.

**Ineligible Player Downfield:**

No Offensive player may run Out of Bounds without the ball and then touch the ball on the current play.

1. If an Offensive Player commits this foul and then catches a ball, the pass will be ruled incomplete.
2. If he receives a lateral, the play will be blown dead at the spot of first contact.

**Interference with the Throw-Off:**

Throwing teams must give the receiving player a half-yard buffer zone to catch any throw-off.

1. The remedy for interfering with a throw-off is that the offensive team takes possession at the spot of the foul or where the return ends, whichever is further, and will receive an extra down in the next set of downs. The possession's first play will be labeled “free down,” and the second play will be first down.

**Missing Flag:**

A missing flag violation occurs when a player begins a play without either of their two flags attached, or it becomes unattached before possession of the ball but not from an early pull.

1. The remedy for a missing flag is the player missing a flag is deemed to be down as soon as the player has possession of the ball.

**Rolling:**

1. An offensive player who rolls on the ground to prevent his flag from being pulled will be deemed down at the spot where he first began to roll.

\*Dipping, jumping, and spinning, not into a defender, are permitted evasive moves for offensive players.

**Roughing the Passer:**

Roughing the passer occurs when a defensive player makes contact, intentionally or not, with the throwing arm or shoulder of any offensive player attempting a forward pass. Making contact with the ball when it is still in the quarterbacks hand is also considered roughing.

1. The remedy is an automatic first down from where the play ended plus an additional 10 yards. The referee also has the discretion to send the player off the field for 2 plays, starting for a man-down situation.

**Tackling:**

Tackling is defined as the intentional act of a defensive player disrupting an offensive players progress through physical contact initiated by the defensive player, such that he loses significant momentum and/or falls to the ground.

1. At the conclusion of the play, the offense will receive the yardage gained and a first down. If the play ends with a loss, the ball will be spotted at the previous spot with a first down.
2. If a tackle occurs on a throw-off, the receiving team will begin its possession with a free down. In addition, a player committing a tackle will be sent off the field, putting his team man down for 2 plays

\*A Tackle does not occur just because the ball carrier went to the ground. IF the defender makes an effort going for the flag then it is not a tackle. If a defender makes no effort for a flag, that is when a tackle should be called.

**Tackling a Free Runner and Defensive Holding:**

A free runner has possession of the football with no defenders in front of him and would be deemed likely by the officials to have scored in the absence of the tackle or intentional defensive hold.

1. The team whose free runner is tackled will be awarded a touchdown.

**Too Many Players:**

1. If the offense starts a play with more than 5 players on the field, the play is dead, and the offense loses the down.
2. If the defense starts a play with more than 5 players on the field, the play continues as a free play, with the offense having the option to take the result of the play or replay the down.

**Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

Unsportsmanlike Conduct is when any of the following occurs:

1. A player/coach disrespects an official either verbally or physically
2. Taunting of players from the opposing team. (TD celebrations are allowed, this would not be included)
3. Fighting/Punching
4. Illegal contact above the shoulders
5. Pretending or acting as if a penalty has occurred in an attempt to influence a Referees decision-making
6. Intentionally blitzing when all team blitzes have been used
7. If a defender pulls a non-runner flag, including their own, during a play.
8. A tackle where the defensive player made no effort at all to grab a flag and went straight for physical contact.
9. The remedy for a Players first Unsportsmanlike Conduct is the offending Player is sent off the field for 2 plays, and his team plays Man Down.
10. On a Players second offense, he must be ejected, and another player from his team who was on the field at the time of the penalty must sit out 4 plays with the team Man Down (at the choice of the fouling teams’ captain/designated head coach). At their discretion, officials can eject a player on their first Unsportsmanlike penalty and enforce a 4-play penalty similar to a second offense. Any player ejected from a game will be ineligible for the next game.

**Rule Challenges:**

**1.** Coaches will get 1 Rule challenge per game to bring in the head ref or owner to make a final decision on the rule.

**Referees and Staff:**

1. All Officials will be trained and credentialed by the League.
2. One or Two officials during league play will work each game.
3. The referee is the senior official and can overrule any other officials. Generally, the referee should defer to the judgment of the official with the best view of the play.
4. The linesmen will stand outside the sidelines on either side of the field near the line of scrimmage.
5. The timekeeper will be responsible for operating the game, play, and go clocks.
6. All officials will wear uniforms purchased through the league.

**Definitions:**

**Ball Ready for Play** – A Dead Ball is Ready for Play when the ball is placed down by an Official

at the spot where the ball will next be put in play, and the Referee signals for the 30-second Play

Clock to start.

**Blitz** – On a Blitz, the Defensive team may rush the Quarterback as soon as the ball is

Snapped. All defensive players are eligible to Blitz. There is no limit to the number of Defensive

Players that can Blitz on a given play.

**Boundary Lines** – The Boundary Lines are the End Lines and the Sidelines and enclose the

field upon which the game is played.

**Controlled Time** – Controlled Time is the period of the game where Running Time is

suspended

**Conversion** – A Conversion is a play that takes place after a Touchdown.

**Dead Ball** – A Dead Ball is not in play, where the runner is declared down, or a pass is declared

Incomplete.

**Defense** – The team that starts the Down without the ball is the Defense.

**Disqualified Player** – A Disqualified Player is prohibited from further participation in the game.

The Referee will disqualify a Player who has received two different penalties that put his team

Man Down.

**Down** – A Down is a period of action that starts when the ball is Snapped and ends when the

ball is declared Dead. The Offensive team has four Downs, a Set of Downs, to achieve a score

or obtain a fresh Set of Downs by crossing the appropriate yard line.

**End Lines** – The End Lines are the lines at each end of the field and are perpendicular to the

Sidelines.

**The End Zone** -is the rectangle formed by the Goal Line, the End Line, and the Sidelines. The

Goal Line and the pylons are in the End Zone.

**Field of Play** – The Field of Play is the rectangle formed by the Goal Lines and the Sidelines.

**First Half** – The first 20-minute period of the game. (18 mins for 6U)

**First/Second/Third/Fourth Down** – The initial Down in each Set of Downs is the First Down,

the second is Second Down, etc. If the Offensive team fails to reach the Box, they must reach

after Fourth Down. The Defensive team starts a new Set of Downs at the spot where the

Offensive Player was ruled down.

**Force Out** – A Force Out occurs when a Player attempting to catch a ball lands Out of Bounds

due primarily to the influence of contact with an opposing Player. A Force Out will be considered

a catch where the Offensive Player left the Field of Play.

**Forward Pass** – A Forward Pass is a ball thrown by an Offensive Player that travels forward from the point where the QB threw the ball. A forward pass does not need to be past the line of scrimmage. Forward

passes are not permitted on returns of Throw-Offs or Punts.

**Foul** – A Foul is any infraction of a playing rule for which a penalty is prescribed.

**Free Down** – A Free Down occurs when the Receiving Team is not given an opportunity to

catch the ball or is tackled on a return. It also occurs when the Defense commits a penalty

whose remedy includes an automatic first down after the Offense has already gained a First

Down on the play. The Free Down gives the Receiving Team a fifth opportunity to advance the

ball to the next Box and is played prior to First Down.

**Free Play** – A Free Play is a play where the team in possession of the ball has the option to

replay the Down or accept the outcome of the play.

**Last man(free runner)** – A Free Runner has possession of the football and would be deemed

likely by the Officials to have scored in the absence of a tackle.

**Fumble or Unintentional Stripped Ball** – Any time a runner, on Offense or Defense, loses

possession of the ball, either on his own or because the ball is stripped out, he will be

considered down at the point where the ball hits the ground. In instances where a Defensive

Player unintentionally strips the ball, and the ball does not hit the ground, only the team in

possession of the ball can recover it. If recovered by the possessing team, they may continue

the play fumble by the offense, and the ball does not hit the ground; the defense can recover the

live ball in the air. Note: Intentional swiping at or stripping of a ball in possession is a tackling

foul.

**Game Clock** – The Game Clock keeps time for the entire game, in both the Running and

Controlled Time segments of the game, and is managed by the Time Keeper. Ideally, the Game

Clock will be visible on all four sides of the field.

**6 Second clock** – The Go Clock will start on the Snap at zero seconds (0), count to three seconds,

and then count up to six seconds. The Go Clock should be visible at each end of the field and

should be either the same device as or adjacent to the Play Clock. If a Go Clock is unavailable,

the count can be communicated verbally by an Official or with a speaker through the AFFL Go

app.

**Goal Lines** – The Goal Lines are the lines between the Sidelines that separate the End Zone

from the Field of Play. The Goal Lines are vertical planes that are parallel to and 7 yards from

the End Lines.

**Handoff** – A hand-to-hand transfer of the ball from one player to another.

**Hash Mark** – A Hash Mark is a mark of 4 inches x 2 feet and is used to measure each yard line.

**Incomplete Pass** – An Incomplete Pass is a Pass that is not caught.

**Interception** – A pass caught by the opposing team is an Interception. The Defense must

obtain complete control of the ball to be ruled an Interception. Complete control is determined at

the discretion of the Officials.

**Lateral** – A Lateral is a sideways or backward Pass or Pitch from one Offensive Player to

another. Laterals are permitted on all plays and points on the field, including Throw-Offs and

Punts. Laterals that are dropped are treated as Fumbles and dead where the ball lands. Two

laterals behind the line of scrimmage and one downfield on each offensive possession. One

lateral on throw-off returns.

**League** – The League refers these rules to the Commissioner’s office of the American Flag

Football League.

**Line of Scrimmage** – The Line of Scrimmage is the vertical plane of the yard line that passes

through the forward point of the ball after it has been placed on the ground and made ready for

play by the Officials.

**Live Ball** – The Ball is Live when it has been snapped from the Line of Scrimmage. The ball will

remain Live until it is ruled Dead and the Down is over.

**Loss of Down** – Loss of Down is a remedy for various penalties in flag football. A team that is

penalized for loss of down must start a new play with one less down remaining in the set of

downs. For example, a team penalized for loss of down on 1st down would start the next play as

2nd down.

**Man Down** – A team is Man Down when one of their players has committed an infraction that

causes the officials to send that player off the field for 1 play.

**Midfield** – Midfield is the 25-yard line.

**Muff** - A muff is an "uncontrolled touch" of the football by a player on the returning team after it

is punted/thrown off and will be treated as a fumble. Therefore, the ball will be considered dead

at the spot of the muff.

**Offense** – The team that starts the Down in possession of the ball is the Offense.

**Opposing Territory** – The field area between Midfield and the End Zone toward which a team’s

Offense drives.

**Out of Bounds** – A Player is Out of Bounds when he touches a Boundary Line or when he

touches anything that is on or outside a Boundary Line, except a Player or an Official.

**Out of Bounds Spot** – Wherever an Offensive Player with the ball exits, the Field of Play will be

the spot of the next Down. The spot will be established by the position of the football that is

furthest from the End Zone at the point where the runner crossed the Sideline.

**Overtime** – Overtime is the third period of the game that is played only if the score is tied at the

end of the Second Half.

**Own Territory** – The area of the field between Midfield and the End Zone away from which a

team’s Offense drives.

**Pass** – A Pass is an act by a Player directing the ball to a teammate in the air.

**Play Clock** – The Time Keeper will manage The Play Clock. Once the Officials put the ball in

play and start the Play Clock, the Offensive team will have 30 seconds to snap the ball, or they

will be guilty of Delay of Game. Ideally, the Play Clock will be visible on both sidelines.

**Possession** – A Possession is defined as a period where the Offense is awarded the

opportunity to complete at least one Set of Downs.

**Quarterback** – The Quarterback is the Offensive Player who first touches the ball after the

Center’s Snap.

**Receiving Team** – The Receiving Team position themselves on their own side of Midfield until

the Throwing Team initiates the Throw-Off.

**Running Time** – Running Time is the period of the game where the clock stops only on Time

Outs.

**Second Half** – The second 20-minute period of the Game.

**Sidelines** – The Sidelines are the lines on each side of the field and are perpendicular to the

End Lines. The Sidelines separate the Field of Play from the area that is Out of Bounds.

**Simultaneous Possession** – Simultaneous Possession occurs when a Forward Pass is caught

by Offensive and Defensive Players at exactly the same time. If this is the case, the ball is

awarded to the offense.

**Snap** – The Snap is the act of removing the ball from the ground and delivering it to another

Player on the Offensive team. The Snap must go through the legs of the Offensive Player

delivering the ball. The defense is not allowed to intercept the ball snapped from center to

quarterback on a blitz, the quarterback must always be able to get the snap from center.

**Stationary Pick** – A Stationary Pick is permissible only on plays from scrimmage and not during

Throw-Offs. A Pick is an act by a Player of using his body position to impede the progress of a

defense Player without using his hands or arms. For a Pick to be legal, the Offensive Player

must establish his position before he makes contact with a Defensive Player. Picks may only be

set after a Player has possession of the ball.

**Throw-Off** – The Throw-Off rules are in Section 9 of the Rules. The Throw Off will start play at

the beginning of each half and after each Conversion attempt.

**Throwing Team** – The Throwing Team throws the Ball to the Receiving team. The Player who is

throwing the ball must throw the ball before he reaches the Line of Scrimmage. His teammates

on the Throwing team must be touching the Line of Scrimmage when the Quarterback releases

the ball. There is not a snap on Throwing plays.

**Touchdown** – A Touchdown is a scoring play. The scoring team receives 6 points for a

Touchdown. Forward progress to determine a Touchdown is determined by the position of the

front of the ball of the Player in control of the ball attempting to enter the End Zone. In addition,

a receiver must have both feet down inside the Field of Play with control of the football to score

a Touchdown.