

ROOKIE TACKLE – 7 MAN (USA FOOTBALL) RULES GUIDE 8-26-25

FIELD DIMENSIONS: 40 YARDS LONG x 35 1/3 YARDS WIDE (INSIDE THE TOP OF THE FIELD NUMBERS)

- AFTER EACH PLAY THE BALL IS PLACED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIELD, HASH MARKS ARE NOT USED
- AT THE OFFICIAL'S DISCRETION THE PLAY CAN BE WHISTLED DEAD IF OFFENSIVE PLAYER RUNS BACKWARD PAST THE 50 YARD LINE INTO THE ADMINISTRATIVE ZONE IF COACHES, ADMINISTRATORS, OR PLAYERS FROM MULTIPLE FIELDS BECOME CLOSE ENOUGH IN PROXIMITY TO BE A SAFETY CONCERN.

GAME CLOCK TIMING: 10 MINUTE RUNNING CLOCK QUARTERS (1ST, 2ND, 3RD, 4TH)

- CLOCK STOPPED FOR TURNOVER (RESTARTED ON FIRST SNAP BY OPPOSING OFFENSE)
- CLOCK STOPPED FOR TOUCHDOWN (RESTARTED ON FIRST SNAP BY OPPOSING OFFENSE)
- CLOCK DOES NOT RUN DURING THE EXTRA POINT
- 2 MINUTE BREAK BETWEEN 1ST & 2ND AS WELL AS THE 3RD & 4TH QUARTERS, 5 MINUTE BREAK BETWEEN 2ND & 3RD QUARTERS
- ONLY LAST 2 MINUTES OF 2ND & 4TH QTRS WILL TIME OUTS STOP THE GAME CLOCK. OTHERWISE, GAME CLOCK RUNS DURING TIME OUTS. (3 T.O.'S PER HALF)
- NO OVERTIME IN REGULAR SEASON

COACHES ON THE FIELD: 2 COACHES ALLOWED ON THE FIELD TO HELP OFFICIALS WITH ALIGNMENT, ALL OTHERS MUST BE ON THEIR SIDELINE.

- ONCE HUDDLE BROKEN ONLY ALIGNMENT, NO ADDITIONAL PLAY INSTRUCTION, OR AUDIBLES, OR CHANGING PLAYS
- PRIOR TO THE SNAP COACHES MUST BE 10 YARDS BEHIND THE QUARTERBACK ON OFFENSE AND SAFETY ON DEFENSE
- IF COACH VIOLATES THE INSTRUCTION/AUDIBLE/CHANGE PLAYS OR THEIR POSITION 10 YARDS BACK IT IS 1 WARNING AND THEN A 5 YARD PENALTY EACH TIME AFTER THE WARNING

SCORING: TOUCHDOWNS - WORTH 6 POINTS;

- 1 POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN – RUN OR PASS IN FROM THE 3 YARD LINE
- 2 POINTS AFTER TOUCHDOWN – RUN OR PASS IN FROM THE 5 YARD LINE
- CANNOT ADVANCE A TURNOVER (NO RETURNS FOR TOUCHDOWNS)
- NO SAFETIES FOR TACKLES IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE ZONE (BEYOND THE 40 YARD LINE)
 - o BALL PLACED BACK ON THE 40 YARD LINE, NEXT DOWN

SPECIAL TEAMS: NO SPECIAL TEAMS, NO KICKS (KICKOFF OR PUNTS)

PENALTIES:

- PENALTIES ON OFFENSE THAT ARE CALLED AND ACCEPTED ON OR BEHIND THE 40 YARD LINE RESULT IN A LOSS OF DOWN.
- PENALTIES ON OFFENSE CALLED BETWEEN THE 40 YARD LINE AND THE END ZONE IN WHICH YARDAGE IS LOST (EVEN IF LIMITED IN ENFORCEMENT BY THE 40 YARD LINE) ARE ENFORCED AS WRITTEN IN TERMS OF DOWN LOST OR REPLAYED.
- ALL PERSONAL FOULS REQUIRE AN IMMEDIATE SUBSTITUTION FROM THE FIELD FOR A MINIMUM OF ONE PLAY TO ALLOW COACHES TO ADDRESS MISCONDUCT AND PROMOTE GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP. ALL TARGETING ARE DISCRETION OF THE REFEREE AND NOT REVIEWABLE.
 - o NOTE: IF A TEAM CANNOT FIELD THE REQUIRED 7 PLAYERS FOR ANY REASON (REMOVAL, EJECTION, INJURY, ETC.) IT IS A FORFEIT
- ALL 15 YARD PENALTIES ARE MARKED OFF AS 10 YARD PENALTIES; ALL OTHER PENALTIES ARE CALLED AND MARKED AS-IS
- ALL PENALTIES (FALSE STARTS, OFFSIDES, HOLDING, FACEMASKE, ETC.) ARE CALLED

ALIGNMENT OFFENSE:

- NOTE: "THE BOX" INCLUDES THE OFFENSIVE LINEMAN (TE IF APPLICABLE 3-4 TOTAL) AND THE DEFENSIVE LINEMAN (2-3 TOTAL)
- EACH PLAY MUST INCLUDE 3 OFFENSIVE LINEMAN WHO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AT THE START CANNOT CHANGE POSITIONS AND CANNOT BE THE FIRST TOUCH ON A PASS OR RUN THE BALL.
- THREE LINEMAN MUST INCLUDE ONE CENTER AND TWO GUARDS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE CENTER.
- GUARD MUST BE 2 POINT STANCE, CENTER MAY ONLY HAVE THEIR SNAPPING HAND DOWN.
- GUARDS MUST BE WITHIN 1 YARD OF CENTER
- QUARTERBACK EXCHANGE MUST BE DIRECT, PISTOL, OR SHOTGUN
- QUARTERBACK SNEAKS UNDER CENTER ARE PROHIBITED (QB DRAW FROM SHOTGUN IS ALLOWED)
- MUST HAVE NO MORE AND NO LESS THAN 4 PLAYERS ON THE LINE (CAN BE A TIGHTEND OR SPLIT END)
- NO TRIPS FORMATIONS (RUNNING BACK BEHIND THE GUARD DOES NOT COUNT AS A RECEIVER)
- MOTION IS ALLOWED BY BACKFIELD PLAYER AS LONG AS IT DOES NOT CREATE TRIPS.
- ALL BLOCKS BELOW THE WAIST ARE ILLEGAL IN ANY SITUATION

ALIGNMENT DEFENSE:

- EACH PLAY MUST INCLUDE 2 DEFENSIVE LINEMAN HEAD UP OR OUTSIDE SHADE OF THE OFFENSIVE GUARDS (CANNOT LINE UP IN A GAP).
 - o PLAYERS IN AN OUTSIDE SHADE MUST ALWAYS HAVE ONE FOOT ALIGNED INSIDE THE STANCE OF THE GUARD.
- DEFENSIVE LINEMAN MUST BE 2 POINT STANCE.
- IF THE OFFENSE INCLUDES A TIGHTEND, DEFENSE MAY ADD 3RD DEFENSIVE LINEMAN MUST BE HEADS UP OVER THE TE (NO SHADING), NOT REQUIRED.
- FOUR ADDITIONAL PLAYERS (LINEBACKERS & CORNERBACKS) CAN LINEUP ANYWHERE BUT MUST BE A MINIMUM OF 4 YARDS OFF THE BALL.
- ONE PLAYER (SAFETY) CAN LINEUP ANYWHERE BUT MUST BE MINIMUM OF 10 YARDS OFF THE BALL.
- NO BLITZES ARE ALLOWED, NATURAL FLOW ON A HANDOFF IS ALLOWED BUT PREDETERMINED PENETRATION TO A SPECIFIC GAP IS ILLEGAL
- PLAYERS WITHIN "THE BOX" AT THE SNAP CAN PENETRATE HOWEVER
- ON PASS PLAYS ONLY THE PLAYERS WITHIN "THE BOX" CAN RUSH THE PASSER, ALL OTHERS MUST BE IN COVERAGE UNTIL THE QUARTERBACK RUNS THE BALL
- DEFENSIVE PLAYER CANNOT "CUT" OR CONTACT THE OFFENSIVE BLOCKER BELOW THE WAIST AND IS ILLEGAL IN ANY SITUATION
- IF THE BALL IS AT OR WITHIN THE 4 YARD LINE, THE 4 NON-LINEMAN, NON-DEEP PLAYERS MAY ALIGN ON THE GOAL LINE. MUST HAVE THE SAFETY 10 YARDS
 - o NO BLITZING RULE STILL APPLIES, AND NO ADDITIONAL PASS RUSHERS ON A PASS PLAY.

Hill Country Pop Warner U9, U10 & U12 Hybrid Weight Overlay Rules 2025

1. Overview: The following rules and regulations are made by Hill Country Pop Warner as an overlay to the National Pop Warner U9, U10 & U12 rules and regulations. In the event the below rules are silent on a topic then the National Pop Warner U9, U10 & U12 rules will be enforced. If National Pop Warner U9, U10 & U12 rules and regulations are silent on a topic then the NCAA rules and regulations are to be enforced. In the event any team within HCPW plays outside of the league, then the below rules and regulations will not apply.
 - a. No Maximum weight limit for any player. Age restrictions pursuant to PW Rule Book
 - b. Maximum weight for ball carrier/receiver/skill ("Unrestricted") player will be 110 Pounds for U9, 125 pounds for U10 and 140 pounds for U12.
 - c. No Minimum weight for any player.
 - d. Weigh in Guidelines
 - i. There will be one certification of strip weight at the beginning of the season which will be the weight basis for the entire season (no game day weigh-ins). Strip weight will be defined as shorts and shirt.
 - ii. All weights shall be rounded to the nearest full pound. i.e., a player weighing less than ½ pound above a full pound will be rounded down, while a player at or above ½ pound will be rounded up.
 - iii. Players may attempt to qualify for weight a maximum of 2 times and must be certified no later than 7 days prior to the first game of the season.
 - e. X-Players will be required to wear a jersey number between 90 and 99 only. No Unrestricted player will be allowed to be assigned a number within the 90-99 range.
 - f. Each team may have a maximum of 6 x-players per team.
 - g. Ball size will follow PW guidelines.
 - h. Other notations:
 - i. Kickoffs are not allowed under HCPW hybrid rules.
 - ii. Three and Four Point Stances are allowed for U10 & U12 only.
2. Offense:
 - a. No more than 3 X players may be on the field at the same time.
 - b. All X players must play on the line of scrimmage inside the tackle box, X-Man Blocking Zone (XMBZ). (See appendix III)
 - c. The X players must be set, but not necessarily in a three or four point stance if not U10 or U12, at the snap of the ball. X players will not be allowed to have a blocking assignment that would cause their first blocking responsibility to be anyone outside the XMBZ at the snap of the ball when pulling, unless that player is lined up over the X-Players shoulder.
 - d. The furthest outside X player must be covered by a non-X player.
 - e. No plays may be designed to have an X player carry the ball.
 - f. X player may advance a true fumble or tipped/batted pass.
3. Defense:
 - a. No more than 3 X players may be on the field at the same time.
 - b. All X players must play on the line of scrimmage inside the X-Man Block Zone (XMBZ) with their inside shoulder no wider than the outside shoulder of the last lineman on their side.
 - c. The X player must be set in a three or four point for U10 & U12 stance at the snap of the ball. U9 two point stance.
 - d. The X player may advance a fumble or interception as long as they are the original player with the ball. No laterals or hand offs to an X player are allowed.
4. Special Teams:
 - a. There will be no Kickoff and Kickoff Return.
 - b. Receiving team gets the ball on their 35 yard line.

- c. Punt and Punt Return will be considered offense and defense accordingly and thus follow the rules mentioned above.
 - d. The penalty for the misuse of an X player will be an Unsportsmanlike conduct penalty (15 yards) against the head coach.
5. Misuse:
- a. The first & second penalty for the misuse of an X player in formation will be an illegal procedure penalty (5 yards). The third infraction will be an Unsportsmanlike conduct penalty (15 yards) against the head coach. The Fourth infraction will be a second unsportsmanlike penalty (15 yards) against the head coach. With two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties head coaches are ejected from the game per PW rules.
 - b. The first penalty for the illegal use of an X-player in the development of a play will be an Unsportsmanlike penalty (15 yards) against the head coach.

Appendix III – XMBZ Rule Clarification Free (X-Man) Blocking Zone Parameters: The definition of the X Man blocking for the purpose of X-Player Alignment and usage will use the basic dimensions of the XMBZ now known here as the X-Man Blocking Zone. The Zone will be designated as 4 yards either side of the ball and close enough to the line of scrimmage to be determined on the line of scrimmage. The Zone will be a defined area at the snap of the ball and will remain a designated Zone. A player is in the X-Man Blocking Zone when any part of his body is in the Zone at the snap of the ball.

For the Purpose of Blocking Zone Play Designs: Free Blocking Zone or XMBZ is defined as follows:-Blocking Zone - Legal Blocking.

1. The Free-blocking zone is a rectangular area extending laterally 4 yards either side of the spot of the snap and 3 yards behind each line of scrimmage. A player is in the x man free-blocking zone when any part of his body is in the zone at the snap.
2. Blocking below the waist is permitted in the X man-blocking zone when the following are met in accordance with PW and NCAA rules:
 - a. All players involved in the blocking are on the line of scrimmage and in the zone at the snap.
 - b. The contact is in the zone.
 - c. Chop blocking: blocking below the waist while the layer is in contact with another blocker above the waist is ALWAYS illegal.
3. Clipping is not permitted in the X Man-Blocking Zone!

U9

HYBRID RULES:

- See Hybrid Rules above for X-Player restrictions.

GAME BALL:

- K2 (Wilson), Rookie (Spalding) or Pee Wee (Nike/Under Armour), R2CFB PW-B (Rawlings).

OFFENSE:

- Line - 2 point stance.

DEFENSE:

- Line - 2 point stance.
- Line - **No more than 6 on the line of scrimmage.** These are the only players to move forward immediately at the snap of the ball. (There is NO 1 yard off the line of scrimmage restriction.)
- Line - May not line up over the center.
- Line - Can line up in the A gap as long as not covering the center and do not initiate contact with center).
- Defensive Ends (Non X-Man)- Restricted to lining up not more than 1 yard outside of the tight-end or 2 yards outside the offensive tackle if there is not a tight-end.
- Linebackers - Must be 3 yards off the line of scrimmage.
- Corners - Must be 5 yards off the line of scrimmage.
- Safeties - Must be 7 yards off the line of scrimmage.
- Linebackers & DB's may move toward the runner after a **read-step**.

KICKING:

- No Kickoffs.
- No rushing of punts, field goals or point after touchdown.

COACHES:

- Maximum of 1 coach per team is permitted on the field except during punts. (HCPW override of NPW Rule Book)
- Must be at least 10yds from the line of scrimmage at ALL times. Be behind the safety when ball is snapped on D.

NO BLITZING

NO CHOP BLOCKING

Penalty for violation of ALL of the above rules:

- 1st Violation: Warning
- Additional Violations: **10 yards** unsportsmanlike conduct.

Mandatory Play Rule:

- 16-25 Players = 12 Plays.
- 26-30 Players = 10 Plays.
- 31-35 Players = 8 Plays.

U10 & U12

See Hybrid Rules above for X-Player restrictions.

U10 & U12 is regular football with limited restrictions:

GAME BALL:

- **10U** = TDJ (Wilson), Junior (Spalding) or Junior (Nike/Under Armour), R2CFB J-B (Rawlings).
- **12U** = TDY (Wilson), Youth (Spalding) or Youth (Nike/Under Armour), R2CFB-Y-B (Rawlings).

No Kick Offs – Ball placed on 35

Kicks are live when ball is snapped, Punts and PAT's. Defense can rush when ball is snapped. No 30 yard walk off. If you punt, then you punt the ball.

No special rules on distances for defenders.

No restriction on nose guard. (Except for PAT's and Punts)

Blitzing is allowed.

No limits on defenders on the line of scrimmage (Except Lopsided Rule when one team is 30 points or more see below).

No coaches on the field. Regular football.

For Lopsided Rule see Pop Warner Rule Book Page #43-45. 30 point differential or more triggers a running clock until the end of the game regardless is the point differential narrows (only referee has the discretion to stop the clock). The team winning can only run between the tackles and cannot pass. Penalty is 5 yards from previous spot and loss of down. No restriction on losing team on offense. **Both teams on defense are limited to a 4-3-4 defensive alignment** = 4 defensive linemen on the line of scrimmage, 3 linebackers 5 yards from the line of scrimmage, and 4 defensive backs 10 yards from the line of scrimmage. No Blitzing. 15 Yard penalty enforced from the previous spot after one-warning. The winning team cannot advance a fumble or interception. Ball is ruled dead at the spot. If the differential point falls below 30 then regular game rules applied, no restriction on offense and defense.

OVERTIME RULES – (No Tie Games in 9U, 10U & 12U)

HCPW Overtime Rules:

Excluding Rookie Tackle, if a HCPW game ends in a tie, the game will go into overtime and modified NCAA rules will be used as follows:

Coin Flip determines Defense or Offense, loser picks end zone like NCAA. The ball will be placed on the 10-yard line for the First, and if necessary, Second Overtime.

First Overtime: Same rules as NCAA. Can go for 1 or 2 point conversion if a team scores a TD (2pts is a kick). 1 time out allowed per team.

Second Overtime: Teams will have to go for a 2-point conversion, if a TD is scored. 1 time out allowed per team.

Third or more Overtime: The ball is placed on the 3-yard line for an extra point attempt. It can be for 1 or 2 pts. For 9U, teams will have to declare beforehand. Only 1 time out for the rest of the Overtime Periods.

Continue until the tie has been broken.

RULE 25: SCORING VALUES

Touchdown	6 points
Point after TD by run or pass	1 point
Point after TD by kick	2 points
Safety (awarded to opponent)	2 points
Field goal	3 points
Forfeit (offended team wins by)	1-0

RULE 26: SCORES

S1: LOPSIDED/INTENTIONALLY RUN UP SCORES

If at any point in a game there is a 30-point score differential, the following shall occur:

RULE 10: MANDATORY PLAY RULE

The following shall be the Minimum Mandatory Play Rule (MPR) for all Pop Warner teams. Each league may set a higher number of Mandatory Plays, but never less than the minimum set by PWLS. All MPRs should be based on eligible players at the time of the game.

JPW-BAN, 10U-14U:	TM-MM, 6U-9U:
16-25 players - 10 plays	16-25 players - 12 plays
26-30 players - 8 plays	26-30 players - 10 plays
31-35 players - 6 plays	31-35 players - 8 plays

6u, 7u- Will follow the same MPR requirements as the Mitey-Mites. The plays must be from the line of scrimmage and declared "active."

- A. All players shall be provided their mandatory plays by participation in "active" plays, without the intent to minimize the action or integrity of the plays. Plays such as, but not limited to, having the center snap the ball to the quarterback, and then the quarterback fall to the ground, take a knee, spiking the ball regardless of whether the ball is moved or not while substitutes are playing other positions, shall NOT be considered as active plays.
- B. A play shall not count toward fulfillment of the MPR if the play results in a penalty which causes the down to be replayed.
- C. All players shall receive their mandatory plays by the end of the third quarter, or they shall enter the game at the start of the fourth quarter, and remain in the game until they have received their required number of plays.
- D. Failure to adhere to MPR requirements will result in forfeiture of game in addition to enforcement policies outlined in Part IV, S1.
- E. In addition, a player denied his/her required number of plays will start the next game and receive double the number of Mandatory plays in that game. Failure to comply with this provision will be deemed a second violation.

Each League shall establish its own system for enforcing the MPR, and must provide a simple handout or digital file describing its MPR so that this information is made available to each coach throughout the entire League, before the beginning of the season. The Nationally preferred system is that used in the National games.

RULE 11: THE FIELD AND MARKINGS

S1: The home team is responsible for the preparation of the playing field and all required accessories for a game. All fields will be equipped and marked in accordance with high school standards. Lime and other caustics shall not be used.

RULE 26: SCORES

S1: LOPSIDED/INTENTIONALLY RUN UP SCORES

If at any point in a game there is a 30-point score differential, the following shall occur:

Part V: 11-Man Tackle Playing Rules

- A. Game Clock: The game clock shall run continuously and only stop at the discretion of the referee. It will never revert to a stop clock, regardless of the point differential.
- B. Play Clock: Officials shall enforce reasonable snap timing to assist with MPR compliance for both teams.
- C. Restrictions: All restrictions noted below end if the score differential falls below 30 and are re-instated if it later reaches 30 points.
- D. Winning Team:
 - 1. Shall make every effort to replace starters with reserve players.
 - 2. No passes (forward or backward) or running outside the tackles.
 - i. PENALTY: 5-yards from the previous spot and loss of down
 - 3. No onside kicks.
 - 4. May not advance a fumble or interception. The ball is dead at the change of possession spot but possession is maintained by the winning team at that spot.
- E. Both Teams:
 - 1. Must fulfill Minimum Play Requirements
 - 2. No blitzing is allowed.
 - i. Only defensive linemen may move forward immediately at the snap.
 - ii. Linebackers and Defensive Backs may move toward runner after a read step.
 - iii. 15-yard penalty after one warning.
 - 3. Shall use 4-3-4 defensive alignment = 4 defensive linemen on the line of scrimmage, 3 linebackers 5 yards from the line of scrimmage, and 4 defensive backs 10 yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - i. 15-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot after one warning.
 - 4. Punts, field goals, and extra-point kicks are allowed.

S2: FULL INVESTIGATION

When the statements of the coaches are in disagreement, the League shall require the Head Coach and all Assistant Coaches of each team to submit written answers to the following questions:

- A. What in your opinion caused the lopsided score?