

NFL FLAG RULES for SVFL

4.1.24

The game should be played between 2 teams of 7 players each. Five players are required to avoid a reschedule. (We could often have less than 7 players. We will go to six then down to 5 so that we can keep playing.)

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its start line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, the team has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on the start line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 4 downs, the opposition starts its drive from its own start line.
6. All possession changes start on offense's start line.
7. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.
8. Away teams wear the white side of jersey.
9. The expectation is there is to be an equal distribution of playing time regardless of talent or ability. We remind all coaches that the priority is learning and growing the enjoyment of the game. We expect all players to have opportunities to possess the ball on offense.

Coaches/Team Managers and Parents

1. All Coaches and team managers are expected to adhere to NFL FLAG philosophies, coaching guidelines and code of conduct, all coaches, assistant coaches and team managers must sign a code of conduct form, prior to first practice. Parents will be held to the code of conduct as well.
2. Only 2 coaches and 1 team manager per team are allowed on the sidelines. All team photographers, team moms, fans, etc. must remain a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area and/or designated area.

3. Only 1 coach per team will be allowed on the field during offensive and defensive possessions.

K-2 2 coaches on the field for offense, 1 for defense.

$\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{5}{6}$ - 1 coach at all times

$\frac{7}{8}$ none.

a. Coaches and team managers, it is your responsibility to keep your fans in the designated areas.

3. In accordance with developing the understanding and enjoyment of the game, coaches are expected to teach their players and use “football” plays.

4. Any attempt by an opposing coach to purposely deceive the other team will not be tolerated. Play and performance should be determined by the players on the field.

Terminology

Boundary Lines- The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.

Line of Scrimmage- (LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.

Line-to-Gain- The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.

Rush Line- An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.

Offense- The team with possession of the ball.

Defense- The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.

Passer- The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.

Rusher- The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/ her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.

Live Ball- Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

Dead Ball- Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.

Whistle- Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.

Inadvertent Whistle- Official's whistle that is performed in error.

Charging-An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.

Diving – A ballcarrier may not dive. Diving is an offensive player leaving their feet without returning to their feet in an effort to gain extra yardage. Defenders may dive to pull a flag

Screen Blocking - Screen Blocking is legally obstructing an opponent **without** initiating contact with him/her with any part of the screen blocker's body.

Flag Guarding-An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.

Shovel Pass- A legal pitch attempted beyond the line of scrimmage.

Lateral- A backward or sideway toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct- A rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

Equipment

1. All players must wear official NFL FLAG belts and mouth guards at all times while on the playing fields.

2. NFL FLAG footballs will be provided. Team footballs are not allowed.

3. Players must wear cleats. Metal cleats are never allowed and must be removed.

4. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.

5. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.

6. Players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. If there are pockets they must be tapped.

7. Currently Head Gear is optional and can be purchased from a third party. Ex Szymik.com

Field

1. The field dimensions are 25 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-run zones precede each line-to gain by 5 yards.

2. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no

run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion even if the defense is using their Blitz. All plays must be pass plays beyond the line of scrimmage. Except in the K-2 division.

3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

4. Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on 2 continuous 25-minute halves. 2. Halftime is 5 minutes.

3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 35 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced. (There will be leniency with K-2 division.)

4. There are no team timeouts.

5. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty.

6. If the score is tied at the end of 50 minutes, the game is considered a tie, and no overtime will be played.

Scoring

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points

2. **PAT** (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)

a. Note: 1-point PAT is pass only; 2-point PAT can be run or pass. ***K-2 can**

run the ball there is no run zone.

There are no safeties.

Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground.

b. **Interceptions NOT are returnable and a dead ball. Interceptions are dead balls and will be spotted at the 40-yard (start) line. This is because we are fitting 5 fields of play on the upper fields. Therefore, all offenses will go in the same direction, and there will be only one endzone. (If needed check out the field layout in the NFL Flag rulebook.)**

4. Mercy Rule: If after the first few games, there is a large imbalance in score differential, we will incorporate a mercy rule. Once one team is up 4 TD Mercy rule will go into effect and the team must play one player down for the remainder of the game.

With uneven skilled teams mercy rule will encourage fair play.

Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. Substitutions may be made at any time in between plays.
5. Any official can whistle the play dead.
6. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground. i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground. (K-2 will be automatic reply on a bad snap and there will be no loss of down)
 - b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown or PAT is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires. (K-2 at ref discretion) - **Refs to count out loud**
 - i. Inadvertent whistle.
- J. When there is an interception.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. (If the ball is fumbled forwards then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession.)

8. If an inadvertent whistle occurs with no time left on the clock at halftime or end of game, the offense will have one untimed down. The offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
9. Officials/Referees decisions are FINAL. Absolutely no challenge of any play or call. Coaches may voice their concern after the game only to an SVFL official on site.

Running

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run beyond the line of scrimmage with the ball, except for blitz plays that occur outside of the 2 “no run” zones. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap. In K-2, the quarterback can run anytime the player is blitzed.
3. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. ***“Center sneak” play is no longer allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.***
4. Laterals, tosses, pitches are allowed behind the line of scrimmage.
5. No-run Zones are located 5 yards before the end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in any fashion in these 2 zones. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD). *If the QB is blitzed can not run the ball.
6. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
7. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
8. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
9. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
 - a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
10. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
11. Offensive players may not run with the ball-carrier. This will be considered blocking.
12. Flag obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on

the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

13. Absolutely no stiff arming allowed.

Penalty: Stiff Arm, 10 yards from the spot of the penalty

14. Roughing the passer – Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into the passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown, also there should be no attempts to hit the player's arm during a throwing motion.

Penalty: Roughing the Passer, 10 yards, automatic first down

BLOCKING

1. There is no blocking of any kind.

Passing

1. Laterals, tosses, and pitches are allowed behind the line of scrimmage.

b. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage. There is no intentional grounding for K-2 Division.

2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

3. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead and it is considered a sack. The ball will be spotted where the quarterback is standing once the 7 second clock runs out. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect. (counted by the ref) **Not for K-2**

Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the Center and the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage to the QB).

2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.

3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.

4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

Rushing the Passer

1. Only 1 player may rush/blitz the passer and the 1 blitzer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. An official will mark the 7 yard blitz location on every play. Only 1 rush/blitz per set of downs is allowed. If rush/blitz is not used during 4 downs then it can be used during extra point attempt. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage. K-2 level must identify blitzing player to referee/other team coach prior to play.

2. Once the ball is handed off, tossed, lateralled or pitched behind the line of scrimmage by the QB, the seven-yard and 7 second rules are no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.

2a - K-2 ALL defenders must start the play 5 yards off the line of scrimmage.

3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage.

a A legal rush/blitz is:

i. Any 1 player rush from a point 7-yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.

ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.

b. A penalty may be called if:

i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).

ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped –is offsidess (5-yards from line of scrimmage and first down).

iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).

c. Special circumstances:

i. Teams are not required to rush/blitz the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.

ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play in the 3rd grade and up divisions. **With the exception of K-2**

4. Player rushing the quarterback may not attempt to block a pass.

5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the “path or line” is

occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.

6. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where the ball is once the flag is pulled.

Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot **tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags**. At the refs discretion IF A PLAYER is TACKLED (Tackled will be defined as an unsafe play on the ball carrier that results in the defensive player taking down the offensive player without a clear attempt on pulling the flag.) with an open field in front of them IT IS AN AUTOMATIC TD FOR OPPOSING TEAM. COACH, PLAYER AND PARENT WILL GET WARNINGS. TACKLING DURING NFL FLAG CAN RESULT IN REMOVAL OF PLAYER FROM GAME, SEASON AND OR LEAGUE.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends or where The ball is caught.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

Formations

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to six players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
2. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
3. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs or

sideways to a player in the backfield. Snap can be under center, pistol or shotgun style or side snapped.

1. If a female is playing center, the ball needs to be side snapped.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!

2. Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player, players, coaches, or spectators will be ejected from the game.

3. No one may physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.

4. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.

5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.

6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:

a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.

b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.

c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.

7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:

a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.

b. Stay in the end zone area, not between fields.

c. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.

8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:

a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

Penalties

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
8. In the last 2 minutes of the game offensive offside/false start will result in a LOSS OF A DOWN.

ii. Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference Automatic first down
Holding +5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping +10 yards and automatic first down

iii. Offensive spot fouls

Screening, blocking or running with the ball -10 yards and loss of down
Charging -10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding -10 yards and loss of down

iv. Defensive penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness +10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct +10 yards and automatic first down
Offside +5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker) +5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball) +5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer +5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting +5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

v. Offensive penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness -10 yards and loss of down

Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct -10 yards and loss of down

Offside / false start

Illegal forward pass (Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)

-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

Offensive pass interference -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down Illegal motion

(More than one person moving) -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down Delay of game -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

Impeding the rusher -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

Illegal Procedure -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down