



FRIDAY NIGHT FLAG RULEBOOK

For Players, Parents, Coaches, Referees & Owners



TERMINOLOGY

Boundary lines	The outer perimeter lines around the field, including sidelines and rear end zone lines.
Line of Scrimmage (LOS)	An imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
Rush Line	An imaginary line running across the width of the field 10 yards (into the defensive side) from the LOS.
Offense	The squad with possession of the ball.
Defense	The squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
Passer	The offensive player who throws the ball and may or may not be the Quarterback.
Rusher(s)	The defensive player(s) assigned to rush the Quarterback to prevent him/her from passing by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass. Rusher(s) must start their rush from the Rush Line.
Downs (1-2-3)	The offensive squad has 3 attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the midfield line to get another set of downs or to score.
Live Ball	The period of time that the play is in action. Generally used regarding penalties, live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
Dead Ball	The period of time immediately before or after a play.
Whistle	The 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	An official’s whistle that is performed in error.
Shovel Pass	A legal pass attempted behind the LOS by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it toward a receiver in a shot-put type manner.
Lateral	A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.

LEAGUE MISSION

At Friday Night Flag, our goal is to create competitive matchups that keep players engaged, challenged, and developing, while emphasizing sportsmanship and safety. Coaches and parents support this mission by modeling respect, encouraging all players, and helping create a fun, positive environment on and off the field.

ELIGIBILITY

- All players must be registered with a signed parent/guardian waiver.
- Age or grade may be verified with a birth certificate or report card.
- Divisions are based on grade level; players may register to play up but not down.
- Players must be at least 4 years old by the first game night to participate in the Kindergarten division.
- Eligibility concerns must be submitted to league organizers privately and include the player’s full name and a clear description of the concern. A \$50 eligibility inquiry fee is required prior to review and will be refunded if the concern is validated.

- Players ineligible for a division may be disqualified, and any individual or team that invites ineligible players to play will face disciplinary action.
- Raising or circulating eligibility concerns throughout the league after a ruling will result in disciplinary action.

EQUIPMENT

- The league provides each player with a jersey, a pair of shorts, and flag belts.
- The league supplies a football for each team to use during games and practices.
- Official NFL Flag jerseys and flag belts must be worn during play.
- Home teams wear dark jerseys, visiting teams wear light jerseys.
- Mouthguards are optional but strongly encouraged for all players.
- Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets are not allowed; sweats must be worn under their shorts in cold weather.
- Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
- Players must wear shoes. Cleats are encouraged; cleats with exposed metal are not allowed.
- Players must remove all watches, earrings, and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
- All jerseys must be tucked in if they hang below the belt line before each play begins.
- Flags must be worn on the hips and remain fully visible and unobstructed at all times.

COACHES

- Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. All new head coaches are required to pass a background check.
- All coaches are expected to adhere to league philosophies, coaching guidelines, and codes of conduct.
- Parents are encouraged to support coaches at all times. Any coaching concerns, unless serious in nature, should first be addressed directly with the coach. If the issue cannot be resolved, the concern may then be escalated to league organizers.
- **Only head coaches are allowed to communicate with referees during games.** An assistant coach may communicate with referees only when serving as the acting Head Coach.
- Field access is determined by division.
 - Kinder-2nd grade: Coaches may be on the field for the entire play on both offense and defense. Only two coaches maximum allowed on the field.
 - 3rd–8th Grade: Offensive coaches may remain behind the offense during play. Defensive coaches may only be on the field during pre-snap.
- Only three coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines and all must stay within the coaches' box, which extends along their sideline from one 5-yard line to the other, in front of each end zone.
- Once the ball is snapped, coaches may not interfere with the play. Any interference, including assisting a defensive rusher or contacting a ball carrier, will result in a penalty.
- A head coach may use a timeout to question a ruling, excluding judgement calls. If the coach is correct, no timeout is charged; if the coach is incorrect, the coach is charged a timeout. All officials review controversial calls; the head referee makes the final decision.

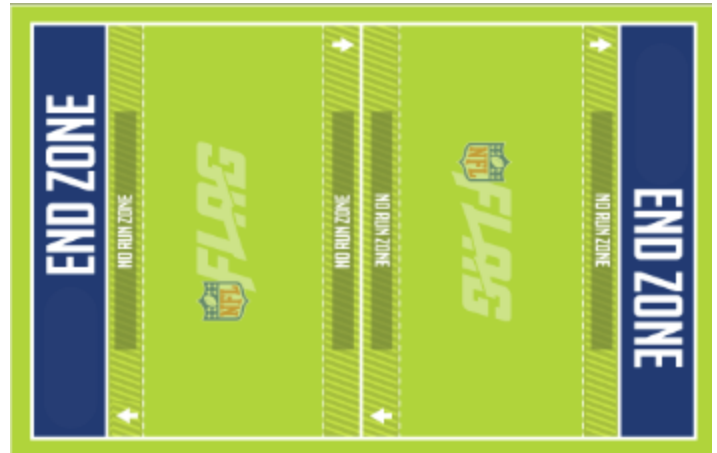
ROSTERS

- Games are played 5 on 5.
- Teams must have at least four (4) players. If a team has three (3) or fewer players within 10 minutes of the scheduled start time, the game is a forfeit. The opposing team may loan a player for a fun game, but the result remains a forfeit.

- Each team is made up of between 8-10 players. Coaches are expected to provide equal playing time and encouraged to give opportunity for all players who want to be active on offense, including running, catching, or throwing the ball. Playing time will vary by team size and number of players available at game time. (See the Substitutions section below.)

FIELD & NO-RUN ZONES

- The field has two end zones and a first down at midfield, each preceded by a 5-yard no-run zone.
- Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- No-run zones prevent power running plays; teams may not run the ball within these zones.
- All passes from within the no-run zone must be forward passes; shovel passes are permitted. Any handoff or toss play must end with a forward pass to be legal.
- Each offensive drive includes two no-run zones (note: there are four total on the field, accounting for each team's offense):
 - Midfield No-Run Zone:** The 5 yards preceding the first down at midfield.
 - After the offense earns a first down, the midfield no-run zone is no longer in effect for that drive. If a subsequent penalty places the line of scrimmage back in the former no-run zone, the offense may run or pass.
 - A live penalty that places the line of scrimmage inside the no-run zone after crossing midfield keeps the no-run zone in effect. (Refer to the "Live Ball/Dead Ball Penalties" section of this rulebook.)
 - Goal-Line No-Run Zone:** The 5 yards preceding the goal line to score a touchdown.
- No-run zones are not enforced in the Kindergarten division.**



GAME START PROCEDURES

- Ref-Coach Huddle: Coaches from both teams and all referees meet 10 minutes prior to the start of the game to discuss standard game procedures and rules. The home team is responsible for providing the ball at the game.
- Equipment Inspection: Referees conduct a thorough equipment inspection, with the help of the coaches.
- Coin Toss: Team captains meet at midfield with coaches and referees for the coin toss. The visiting team calls the toss. The winner chooses whether to start with the ball in the first or second half. The other team chooses which direction to score and will start with the ball in the half the winner did not select.

TIMING RULES

- Games consist of four 10-minute quarters. The game clock is continuous and controlled by the head ref.
- The clock stops only for quarter and mid-quarter breaks, timeouts, injuries, or at the ref's discretion.
- Halftime is 2 minutes long. Time stopped at quarter and mid-quarter is only long enough to allow subs.
- Once the ball is spotted, the offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball. A 10-second warning is given before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- Each team is allowed two timeouts per game.
- If a player is injured, the clock stops and restarts once the player leaves the field.
- During the regular season, tied games at the end of 40 minutes remain a tie.

OFFENSIVE RULES & POSSESSION

1. The offensive team starts at its 5-yard line.
2. The offense has three (3) plays to cross midfield. The offense may go for it on 4th down. If they fail, the defending team takes over where the offense was downed, not at its own 5-yard line.
3. After crossing midfield, the offense has three (3) plays to score a touchdown. There is no 4th-down option after midfield.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession, and the new offense starts at its 5-yard line. All possession changes start at the 5-yard line, except interceptions, which are returned from the point of interception.
5. Teams switch sides after the first half. The team that did not start with the ball takes first possession in the second half.

SUBSTITUTIONS

- Substitutions are allowed only at mid-quarter breaks, quarter breaks, and halftime, except for injured players or when a referee requires a substitution to ensure equal playing time.
- Players on the field play both offense and defense; there are no substitutions for possession changes.
- Coaches are expected to play all eligible players equal time, or as close to equal time as possible given roster size. One warning will be issued before a penalty is assessed. To ensure equal playing time is as follows:
 - **11 players** (*mid-quarter subs required*): 4 play 1.5 quarters, 7 play 2 quarters
 - **10 players**: all play 2 quarters
 - **9 players**: 2 play 3 quarters, 7 play 2 quarters
 - **8 players**: 4 play 3 quarters, 4 play 2 quarters
 - **7 players**: 6 play 3 quarters, 1 plays 2 quarters
 - *No player may play all 4 quarters unless the team has 6 or fewer players.*

SCORING

- **Touchdown (6 points)**: A touchdown is scored when the ball carrier's forward foot crosses the opponent's end zone line.
- **Point After Touchdown (PAT)**: After a touchdown, the scoring team must declare whether they will attempt a:
 - **1-point PAT** from the 5-yard line (pass only)
 - **2-point PAT** from the 10-yard line (run or pass)

Once an attempt begins, the choice cannot be changed. If the offense chooses a two-point attempt and a defensive penalty occurs, they still attempt two points from 5 yards out, and the no-run zone is waived.

If the defense returns a PAT, they are awarded 2 points, regardless of whether the offense was attempting a 1- or 2- point conversion.

- **Safety (2 points)**: A safety is awarded to the defensive team when the offensive ball carrier is declared down in their own end zone. After a safety, the scoring team takes possession and begins their drive from their 5-yard line. Safeties include situations where:
 - The ball carrier fumbles in the end zone
 - A defensive player pulls the carrier's flags or the carrier's flags fall out
 - The carrier steps out of bounds in the end zone
 - The carrier touches the ground with a knee or arm
 - An offensive penalty occurs in the end zone

LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead
- Any official can whistle the play dead.
- The official will mark the line of scrimmage (LOS). If any offensive or defensive player crosses the LOS before the snap, the play is immediately dead. Officials may issue an offside warning before enforcing the foul.
- The defense may not imitate the offense's signals or cadence in an attempt to confuse the offensive players. Doing so will result in a defensive delay of game penalty.
- Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - A player fumbles — *NO FUMBLES*. The ball is placed where the ball hits the ground. Exception: QB fumbled snap. A dropped snap is not a dead ball if recovered by the QB quickly. Officials, using their judgment, will whistle the play dead if a blitz is within a few yards of the quarterback. The ball will be placed at the original LOS and a down will be consumed.
 - The ball carrier's flag is pulled.
 - The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored.
 - The ball carrier's knee or arm hits the ground.
 - The ball carrier's flag falls out.
 - The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one flag.
 - The 7-second pass clock expires.
 - An inadvertent whistle is performed (at the spot where the ball was whistled dead).
- In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and down is consumed, or
 - Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage (LOS).

FORMATIONS

- The offense must have at least one player (the Center) on the line of scrimmage (LOS) and may have up to four players on the LOS. The Quarterback must be off the LOS.
 - Only one offensive player may be in motion at a time. Motion toward the line of scrimmage is not allowed. Parallel motion must be at least one yard off the line, and motion away from the line is allowed.
- Offensive players moving at the same time must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped.
- A false start occurs when a set player moves before the snap. Motion toward the line of scrimmage is an illegal motion.
- The Center must snap the ball with a single, rapid, continuous motion between the legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave the Center's hands. Any slight forward or backward movement of the ball by the Center, without snapping it to the Quarterback, results in a false start.

RUNNING THE BALL

- The Quarterback cannot directly run with the ball.
- The ball is spotted where the runner's front foot is when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball.
- Handoffs are allowed only behind the line of scrimmage; multiple handoffs are permitted. Handoffs to the Center must go around the body, not through the legs. Any player may pass forward from behind the line after a handoff or pitch. Once a handoff occurs, all defenders may rush.
- Laterals and pitches are allowed anywhere on the field.

What the Ball Carrier Can Do

- Spinning and jump cuts (straight up or sideways) are allowed.
- A runner may leave their feet to avoid a collision, as long as no flag guarding occurs.

What the Ball Carrier Cannot Do

- **Diving and Jumping:** Advancing the ball forward by diving or jumping is prohibited.
- **Hurdling:** Jumping over other players is not allowed.
- **Flag Guarding:** The ball carrier may not block a defender from grabbing their flags by stiff-arming, lowering their head, using their hand, arm, or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football or their jersey.
- **Charging:** The ball carrier is responsible for avoiding defenders who are set and under control. Defenders have the right to position themselves in front of the ball carrier. Charging occurs when the ball carrier makes contact by lowering the head or using the shoulder, chest, or forearm.

What the Ball Carrier's Teammates Cannot Do

- Once the ball has crossed the LOS, an offensive player may not impede a player from pulling a flag or blocking will be called. Do not block or screen at any time.
- Running downfield cannot interfere with a defender pulling a flag.

PASSING THE BALL (Note: Refer to Field & No-Run Zones section above.)

- All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage (LOS).
- Shovel passes are allowed, but must be forward passes.
- The Quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the LOS. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule no longer is in effect.
 - If the Quarterback is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock and his/her flags have not been pulled, the ball is returned to the LOS.
- A forward pass is legal as long as the quarterback has at least one foot behind the line of scrimmage. If both feet cross the line of scrimmage, the pass is illegal. If an illegal forward pass is intercepted, the defense takes possession.

RECEIVING THE BALL

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the Quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line).
- A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception.
- Interceptions are returnable. Returns of conversions after touchdowns will be worth 2 points regardless of whether the team was going for a 1-point or 2-point conversion.

RUSHING THE PASSER (BLITZING)

- **Blitzing is not allowed in the Pre-K/Kindergarten division.**

- Rushers must start 10 yards from the line of scrimmage (LOS); any number may rush, others may defend on the line. A marker or referee designates the rush line, and players may confirm their position before each play. Rushers are the only players allowed to blitz the Quarterback when the ball is snapped.
- Once the ball leaves the hands of the Quarterback, the 10-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may cross the LOS.
- Blitzing is not allowed when the LOS is inside the 5-yard line on the opponent's side.

Examples of Illegal Rushes:

- If the rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the LOS before a handoff or pass
- Any defensive player who is not lined up at the rush line and crosses the LOS before the ball is passed or handed off. This includes fumbled snaps.
- The rusher has a CLEAR PATH to the Quarterback, and any interference that would intentionally impede his/her path to the Quarterback will be considered screening at the discretion of the referee. The defense may attempt to block a pass provided they do not strike the passer.
- Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a 10-yard roughing the passer penalty.
- A sack occurs if the Quarterback's flags are pulled or if they drop the ball behind the LOS. The ball is placed where the Quarterback's feet are when the flag is pulled or where the ball hits the ground.

DEFENSIVE RULES & FLAG PULLING

- **Offside:** Defensive players may not cross the line of scrimmage before the snap (+5 yards penalty).
- **Flag Pulling:** Defenders may attempt to pull flags, including diving, but may not tackle. A legal flag pull requires the ball carrier to be in full possession of the ball. Defenders may not pull the flags of players who are not in possession of the ball.
- **Tackling:** A tackle occurs when a defender runs through, pulls down, or holds the ball carrier. Defenders may position themselves in front of the ball carrier if set and under control; contact by an off-balance or uncontrolled defender is considered a tackle.
- **No Stripping:** Defenders may not attempt to take the ball from the ball carrier.
- **Flag-Only Contact:** Defenders may only grab the flags and may not pull jerseys or any other articles of clothing. If a defender affects the ball carrier, it is considered a tackle.
- **Flag Loss:** If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during a play, the player is considered down immediately, and the play ends.
- **Last Defender Penalty:** If the last defender illegally contacts the ball carrier by pulling clothing, tackling, or unintentional tripping, the offense is awarded an automatic touchdown.

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT & FAN SPORTSMANSHIP

Players and fans are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times.

- **Players:**
 - Any intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, unnecessary roughness, offensive or confrontational language, or physical/ verbal abuse toward opponents or officials will result in the game being stopped and the player ejected. Officials have full discretion; one warning may be issued for language before ejection. Ejections are determined by the field manager in consultation with officials and are not subject to appeal.
 - Players are encouraged to hand the flag to the opponent. Flag spiking is discouraged. Continued or excessive flag spiking may result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
 - Any celebration directed toward an opponent is prohibited, including spiking the football, taunting while running down the field, or using taunting gestures or dances.

- **Coaches:** Any violation of the coaches' code of conduct will be documented and addressed by field managers and league organizers. Assistant coaches are held to the same code of conduct.
- **Fans:**
 - Cheer for players without harassing officials or opposing teams. Keep comments clean and profanity-free, and focus on effort and sportsmanship.
 - For safety, younger children and personal items (chairs, coolers, tents, etc.) must remain at least 3 feet from the sideline.
 - Fans must sit on the same sideline as the team they are supporting and may be asked to relocate if seated on the opposing sideline.
- If a player, coach, or fan refuses to leave the field after being directed by the league, the game will be suspended until that individual exits the field area.

MERCY RULE

- Teams with a lead of 30 points or more are required to follow these guidelines:
 - All Point After Touchdown (PAT) attempts must be for 1 point (pass only).
 - While on defense, rushing will not be allowed.
 - Must "punt" on 4th down.
 - The losing team may go for a 4th down option past midfield for a touchdown.

PLAYOFF/CHAMPIONSHIP OVERTIME (OT) RULES

- Each team gets one series of three plays from midfield going the same direction; no 4th down in OT.
- First possession goes to the regulation coin toss winner; each team gets at least one possession.
- All regulation rules and penalties apply; no timeouts.
- Scoring: Same as regulation. If tied after OT, repeat the process.
- Interceptions: If the defense intercepts the ball, the ball is live. If the intercepting team does not score on the return play resets at midfield.
- Change of Possession: Occurs on turnover, score, or failure on downs. Team B takes over at midfield.
- Multiple OT Periods (as needed):
 - 1st OT – as above; PAT optional (1- or 2-point).
 - 2nd OT – first possession to regulation coin toss loser; PAT must be 2 points.
 - 3rd OT – switch possession; PAT rules same as 2nd OT.

Special Circumstances:

- If neither team scores during an overtime period, the team that gains the most yardage will be declared the winner. They do not need to complete 3 plays. For tiebreaker purposes, this is considered equivalent to a 6-point victory. The referee will use a marker to indicate the line-to-gain.
- If both teams gain the same yardage or fail to make positive progress, an additional overtime period will be played.
- If Team 1 loses yardage at midfield, Team 2 only needs to gain any positive yardage to win and is not required to complete three plays.

PENALTIES

- All penalties are called, determined, and enforced by the referees. The head referee announces the ruling and has final authority on all calls, but may consult with field managers if needed.
- Unless otherwise noted, penalties are enforced from the line of scrimmage (LOS). Spot fouls are enforced from the spot of the foul.
- Only the head coach may request rule clarification or interpretation from an official. Players may not question judgment calls.

- Live-ball penalties are enforced before the play is considered complete. Dead-ball penalties are enforced after the play ends.
- Penalties will be assessed as half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- Spot fouls in the end zone: Defensive – ball on the 1-yard line, first down; Offensive – safety.
- All offensive penalties within the last two minutes will result in the referee stopping the clock.
- A game or half may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense chooses to decline the penalty.
- Three unsportsmanlike sideline infractions result in a forfeited game for that team.

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES

Pre-Snap/Motion		
False Start / Illegal Motion	More than one player moving, motion toward LOS	-5 yds from LOS
Delay of Game	Failing to snap the ball in time	-5 yds from LOS
Offside	Lining up offside before snap	-5 yds from LOS Last 2 min stop clock
Illegal Equipment	A player must wear the league-issued flag belt with all flags fully visible and properly secured on the hips.	-5 yds from LOS
Passing / Receiving		
Illegal Forward Pass	Pass thrown beyond LOS; intercepted = defense possession	-5 yds from LOS & LOD
Pass Interference	Illegal contact by the offense that prevents a defender from playing the ball (illegal pick, push-off)	-5 yds from LOS & LOD
Playing / Coaching Violations		
Equal Playing Time / Sub Violation	Coach fails to follow equal playing time	-10 yds from LOS
Unsportsmanlike Conduct / Sideline Infraction / Taunting	Ill-will or disrespectful celebration	-10 yds from LOS & LOD
Coach Interference	Coach interferes with the play	-5 yards from LOS
Ball Carrier / Contact		
Screening / Blocking	Impede a player from pulling a flag or blocking	Spot foul, -5 yds & LOD
Holding / Illegal Contact	Holding or pushing a defender	Spot foul, -5 yds & LOD
Flag Guarding / Diving	Blocking defender from grabbing flags (stiff-arm, head, arm, jersey, ball)	Spot foul, -10 yds & LOD
Charging	Lowering the head or using the shoulder or forearm to initiate contact on a set defender.	Spot foul, -10 yds & LOD
Unnecessary Roughness	Using unnecessary force	Spot foul, -10 yds & LOD
QB / No-Run Zone Violations	QB runs past LOS, 7-second pass clock violation, run in no-run zone	Dead ball & LOD

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES

Pre-Snap / Rush Violations		
Delay of Game	Mimicking offensive signals or cadence	+5 yds from LOS
Offside	Crossing LOS before snap	+5 yds from LOS
Illegal Rushing	Rusher not 10 yds from LOS	+5 yds from LOS & AFD
Illegal Equipment	A player must wear the league-issued flag belt with all flags fully visible and properly secured on the hips.	+5 yds from LOS
Flag / Ball Violations		
Illegal Flag Pull	Pulling flag before receiver has possession	+5 yds from LOS & AFD
Stripping the Ball	Attempting to take ball from carrier	Spot foul, +10 yds & AFD
Pass Interference	Illegal contact by the defense that prevents a receiver from catching the ball.	Spot foul & AFD
Player / Contact Violations		
Roughing the Passer	Contacting QB after forward pass	+10 yds from LOS & AFD
Holding / Illegal Contact	Holding or pushing offensive player	Spot foul, +5 yds & AFD
Unnecessary Roughness	Unnecessary tackling or pushing	Spot foul, +10 yds & AFD
Last Defender	Last defender tackles, pulls down, or pushes runner out of bounds	Touchdown
Tackling	Defender runs through, pulls down, or holds ball carrier; off-balance/uncontrolled = tackle	Spot foul, +10 yds & AFD
Unsportsmanlike Conduct / Taunting / Coach interference / Sideline Infraction	Ill-will or disrespectful celebration	+10 yds from LOS & AFD
Equal Playing Time / Sub Violation	Coach fails to follow equal playing time policy	+10 yds from LOS