**FSP FLAG** 



**Flag Football**

**Rules and Training Guide**

**2023 Season**

**OUR GAME BASICS:**

**Overview:**

* The game is 5 versus 5, minimal contact, non-screening, flag football - All players are eligible receivers
* No player or non-player may be in the restricted zone during a live ball
* Game officials will spot the ball where the ball was at the time it became dead, not where the runner was at the time
* Fields have “no run zones” (blue cones) 5 yards from each end zone
* When the ball is spotted in a “no run zone” the offense must execute a pass play that breaks the line of scrimmage
* There are no field goal attempts or physical punting
* First possession is determined with a coin toss (a team coach must attend the coin toss or lose the toss)
* The game is officiated from the sidelines using a two person mechanic (Line Judge, Down Judge)
* No “pass clock” is used, the passer may ‘buy time’ by scrambling away from the rushers pursuit
* An onside play option is available in the last five minutes of the second half to a scoring teams that is trailing in points - There is a Mercy Rule if either coach elects to use it at the appropriate time. Officials will ask when appropriate.
* Game officials will use preventative officiating when possible
* Flag football is a finesse game versus the brute strength of traditional football. Play accordingly.

**Clock Operations:**

* Game is 40 minutes (two 20 minute halves)
* Clock will run continuously during the first 19 minutes of each half unless stopped for a timeout, injury, etc. - Each team will have one timeout per half. They do not roll-over from the first half to the second half - Timeouts are 30 seconds
* During the final one minute of each half a “pro-clock” or “stop-clock” is used (out-of-bounds, incomplete pass, etc.)

**Offense:**

* Possession will begin on the 10-yard line (Small orange cone)
* Snaps must be made between the Center’s legs (exception is 2-grade and below, they may use side-snaps)
* Teams will have four downs to gain a first down at mid-field (Large orange cone)
* Once across mid-field and awarded a new set of downs, teams will have four downs to score
* On fourth down coaches must decide if they want to “go for it” or “punt”
* If they “go for it” and fail to achieve the line-to-gain the opposing team takes the ball from where it became dead
* No physical punts. On a declared “punt” a game official will move the ball to the opponent’s 10-yard line
* Offensive players may not physically impede the defense from getting to the ball carrier
* Ball carriers may use backward passes and legal pitches anywhere on the field
* Fumbles and muffs (including snaps) are dead when they hit the ground
* Receivers must have one foot inbounds and gain possession to be a legal catch
* Ball carriers may slightly leave their feet but may not dive, lunge or hurdle an opponent
* Ball carriers may not deny the defense the opportunity to capture their flag in any physical way (flag guarding) - The offense is responsible for retrieving the ball after the play

**Defense:**

* A rush line will be set 10 yards from the line-of-scrimmage
* Legal rushers must be a minimal of 10 yards from the line-of-scrimmage at the snap
* Defenders may enter the backfield once the ball is handed-off, passed backward or the ball touches an offensive player other than the player that took the original snap (i.e. the passer)
* Interceptions during all live ball plays may be returned for points, including during point-after-touchdown (PATS)
* Defensive players may dive to capture a ball carrier’s flag but may not make illegal contact in doing so
* Stripping or attempting to strip the ball from a ball carrier in possession is illegal
* Whether or not a ball was tipped in the air has no bearing on a play as it pertains to fouls (roughing, person foul etc.)

# Boys & Girls Clubs of BellevueFord Sports Perfomance Rule Book & Training Guide

**RULE 1: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

**1. Our Governing Philosophy:**

1. We live our motto: *It Is All About the Kids!*
2. Our focus is on developing our player’s skills, maturity, team work and problem-solving skills, not on “W”s and “L”s. 3) Flag football is a finesse game versus the brute strength game of traditional tackle football. Play accordingly.
3. Remind yourself and others that no one will get drafted by an NFL team from this league, so just relax and enjoy.
4. FSP Flag retains the right to amend, update or edit these rules as situations requires.
5. FSP Flag staff have the authority to make on-the-spot rulings on any dealings regarding this league.
6. FSP Flag reserves the right to alter team schedules to adjust competition-levels and game experience.
7. Our rule book is an evolving document. Your feedback is appreciated. Send comments to athletics@bgcbellevue.org
8. Any running changes or updates to the rule book and training guide can be found at www.bgcbellevue.org
9. When more details are needed than are outlined in our Rule Book, game officials will defer to the most current National Federation of High Schools Rule Book.

**2. Our Game Officials:**

1. Our officials are young adults learning a craft and responsibility, please treat them with the same respect you want for your children and set a positive example.
2. Remember, No Officials = No Games.
3. Our officials administer the rules of this league not any other organization, not the NFL, NCAA etc.
4. Our officials are encouraged to use the ‘preventative style’ of officiating allowing officials to talk to, remind and help players avoid violations whenever feasible. Cautions and teaching points are appropriate most times.
5. It is not the mission of game officials to flag every small, nuanced infractions of traditional football rules (ex:

breaking the huddle incorrectly, being an inch offside, etc.) or other insignificant issues that do not produce a ‘significant unfair advantage’.

**3. Your Required Personal Conduct:**

1. Players, coaches and spectators, and officials must keep their comments profanity free.
2. Disrespectful language, racist, sexist, homophobic remarks, obscene or threating gestures / behavior, and bullying are prohibited.
3. Foul play will not be tolerated.
4. Any staff member that hears or sees anything that in their judgement is an infraction of the required personal conduct standards they may require the person responsible to leave the event.
5. If a player or non-player fails to comply with FSP FLag staff requests they have the authority to forfeit the game and have that individual(s) removed from the rented complex.
6. Fighting will lead to an immediate ejection, possible suspension or even a lifetime exclusion.
7. Alcohol, intoxicants, smoking, vaping, weapons and pets are prohibited on our rented fields.
8. FSP Flag staff, game officials, players and non-players must comply with the rented-facility’s rules.

**4. Your Required Team Conduct:**

1. For the safety of our officials and their ability to administer the game all team personnel and spectators must remain at least two-yards off the sideline and inside the designated or notional team boxes.
2. FSP Flag staff at each site will determine where spectators can and cannot observe from and will err on the side of safety for our players and game officials.
3. Teams are required to clean up their garbage after contests.

**5. Our General Format:**

1) This is a minimal-contact, non-screening, youth, recreational 5v5 NFL Flag recreational league.\*

2) A maximum of five-offensive and five-defensive players are allowed on the field during live plays.

1. A minimum of three players must be fielded to start or continue a contest.
2. All players are eligible receivers.
3. A coin toss will determine first possession.
4. To begin the game, and on most possessions, teams take possession of the ball at their own 10-yard line (orange cone).
5. Teams have four downs to successfully advance to the next line-to-gain and earn a new set of downs or score.
6. On fourth down team coaches will have to decide if they wish to “go for it” or “punt”.
7. If they decide to “go for it” and fail to achieve the line-to-gain the ball will change possession with the new offensive taking possession where the ball became dead.
8. If they decide for “punt” the ball will be moved by a game official to their opponent’s 10-yard line and they will begin their possession from there. There is no physical punting / kicking in our league.
9. “No Run Zones” are delineated by cones. These zones are five-yards from the goal-line.
10. “No Run Zones” are enforced as a safety measure to discourage power-runs, diving, etc. near the goal line. When the ball is spotted inside a “No Run Zone” the offense must execute a forward passing that breaks the line-of-scrimmage.
11. Once the pass breaks the line-of-scrimmage the “No Run Zone” disappears and laterals, pitches, etc. may be used.
12. Mid field cone represents the only “1st Down” markers on the field.
13. The ball will be spotted wherever the ball was at the time of the flag pull or the ball carrier left the field-of-play.
14. Players may extend the ball in front of them while running to gain additional yards.
15. The opposing team is not required to ‘adjust down’ when a team cannot field five opposing players but may do so to show sportsmanship.
16. If a team ‘borrows’ a player from another team to help fill a roster, the game will be recorded as a forfeit, but the game shall be played.

*\* While this is a minimal-contact, non-screening, youth, recreational league, contact does occur on occasion. The vast majority is unintentional and insignificant. Players and parents must understand that contact is impossible to avoid and is usually a result of bodies moving in space simultaneously and the simply the nature of the sport. It is the job of each player, team captains, coaches and officials to keep contact and collisions to a minimum through self-control, training and enforcement. Any significant contact may result in a penalty.*

**7. Coaches Conduct / Bench Fouls:**

1. We are a recreational youth league, not a competitive league. We ask that coaches maintain the spirit and the intent of our rules.
2. Coaches, both on and off the field, are allowed to give verbal guidance during dead ball situations.
3. Coaches who elect to be on the field cannot interfere with a play or imminent play in any physical or verbal way (examples may include: inadvertent screening or blocking, blocking the lines-of-sight, impeding a player or referee, becoming entangled in the play or distracting from their opponents cadence). If they do, the team will incur a Bench Foul.
4. Coaches are prohibited from ‘chasing the play down field’ in the way a game official does.
5. The offense is limited to one coach on the field and they must be 5-yards deeper than their deepest player.
6. One defensive coach may stand in the defensive huddle but must be off the field prior to the snap. Game officials will strive to allow coaches to clear the field in an expeditious manner but must keep the game moving. Coaches may be called for Delay of Game if they can’t clear the field promptly. Teaching Lesson: Keep the game moving or use your time-out.
7. For convenience and to speed the game along teams may huddle on the field-of-play near the sidelines. However, only five players and one coach are allowed in the huddle.
8. Coaches, nor any other person, are not allowed in the restricted area along the sidelines during a live ball. Violations will be charged to the head coach. Teaching Lesson: Have the assistant coach help you keep this area clear; if the assistant coach is not in attendance and parent should be appointed the task.
9. Teams may be disqualified if they receive four unsportsmanlike conduct penalties during a contest.

**RULE 2: UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT**

**1. Safety:**

1. Players may not wear hard, unyielding, or stiff material items that in the view of the officiating crew may present a hazard to other players. This includes traditional ‘hard-cast’ even if wrapped or covered.
2. Players must properly wear a protective mouthpiece (*in their mouth*) while on the field-of-play. Failure to comply is a safety violation, not a foul/penalty. Coaches, officials and players share responsibility for safety.
3. We recommend players wear pants or shorts that do not have pockets, belt loops, zippers, or exposed draw strings.
4. Players must wear close-toed shoes. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed.
5. Players may wear eye protection to include prescription glasses or flexible sunglasses.
6. Players may wear a face shield molded to the face with no protrusions to protect against facial injury.
7. Jewelry that might endanger players must be removed before play or taped to the body.
8. We recommend players have groomed finger nails or wear gloves to ensure the safety of their opponents.
9. Players may wear knit or stocking-style caps.
10. Soft-shelled helmets designed for flag football players (e.g., the EliteTek brand, et. al.) may be worn.
11. Baseball-style caps may be worn but must be turned backward.

**2. Flag Belts:**

1. Every member of a team on the field must wear a flag belt provided by FSP Flag.
2. Flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction.
3. If a player chooses to wear a hand towel, or any other object, on their waist it will be treated as part of the flag belt.
4. Flags cannot be the same/similar color as a player’s pants/shorts. Similar is at the official’s discretion.

**3. Team Jerseys:**

1. Players must wear a reversible jersey provided by FSP Flag.
2. ‘Home’ teams will wear the jersey’s dark-side colors, ‘Away’ will wear the jerseys light-side colors.
3. If a player does not have a team jersey with them it is permissible at FSP Flag staff's discretion, wear a “street shirt”.
4. It is the team coach’s responsibility to clear a non-team jersey / street shirt with the game official or FSP Flag staff prior to the player taking the field of play.
5. All players are to wear his team jersey as an outer garment. It is not permissible to wear jackets, rain gear, etc., over the team jersey while on the field of play. It is permitted while in the team box area.
6. Players must strive to ensure their jerseys are long enough to remain tucked in during the entire play. If a jersey is not long enough to remained tucked (ex: taller player) the player must wear the belt over the jersey.
7. When a shirt is untucked at the snap a ‘holding’ call on a defender is unlikely when a defender is making a fair and legal attempt at the ball carrier’s flag and ends up with their opponents’ jersey in lieu of the flag belt. Teaching Lesson: Keep shirts tucked.

**4. Miscellaneous Uniform / Gear Issues:**

1. Players may wear a headband made of non-abrasive material. Rubber or elastic bands may be used in hair.
2. Players may tape forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear soft gloves, elbow pads)
3. Footballs must be pebble grained leather or rubber covered and meet these sizes: Pre K – 2d grade: pee-wee football, 3rd – 6th grade: junior football, 7th grade and above: youth football.

**RULE 3: CLOCK MECHANICS**

**1. General Timing Procedures:**

1. Games are 40 minutes (two 20 minute halves).
2. It is our intent to complete a game within one-hour.
3. Officials may stop the clock as needed.
4. Halftime is one minute.
5. Each team will have one time out per half.
6. Team timeouts are 30 seconds. After 30 seconds the official will audibly place the offense on a 25-second play clock.
7. Time outs will not roll over from the first half to second half. They are use them or lose them.
8. Team coaches are encouraged to yell “clock?” or “clock check?” in lieu of “time?” to avoid confusion when requesting a team timeout.
9. The clock will run continuously during the first 19-minutes of each half unless a team timeout is used or play is stopped by an official (e.g. deal with an injury, challenge, referee conference, etc.)
10. A “stop-clock” or “pro-clock” will be in effect in the last one minute of the first and second half.
11. Officials will give a verbal one-minute warning as close as possible to the actual one-minute mark but will not interrupt a live play.
12. The one minute warning will stop the clock.
13. The time remaining on the clock should be announced after every play inside the final one minute of each half.
14. The clock will not run during point-after-touchdown attempts (PATs) in last one-minute of each half.
15. FSP Flag Staff may enter the field during any dead ball situation to address matters they believe should not wait till halftime or the end of the game by calling a ‘Staff Time-Out’.

**2. Clock Operations:**

1. The offense has a 25-second play clock to snap the ball before a delay of game penalty is assessed.
2. Teams will receive one courtesy warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced.
3. No period or half can end if there is an obvious timing error or any other irregularity has occurred.
4. When officials go to the ‘stop clock’ or ‘pro-clock’ mechanic the clock will stop / start as listed below:

a. Defense gains possession of the ball / on the snap

* 1. Inadvertent whistle / at the ready
	2. Incomplete passes / on the snap
	3. Intentional grounding / at the ready
	4. Offense achieves a first down / clocks stops till referee whistles the ready to play whistle
	5. Out-of-bounds plays with a player in possession of the ball / on the snap
	6. Loose ball out-of-bounds / on the ready
	7. Penalty administration (other than Delay of Game) / depends on previous play i. Delay of game / on the snap
	8. Referee timeout / at the Referee’s discretion
	9. Team timeout / on the snap
	10. Injury / when player is removed from field (depending on the status of clock on previous play)
	11. Touchdown or Safety / on the next snap after the PAT attempt. PATs are untimed downs during ‘stop/pro clock mechanics’.

**RULE 4: SCORING**

1. **Scoring Chart:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Touchdown  | • 6 points with the chance to go for a 1-, or 2- point after touchdown attempt (PAT).  |
| Point After Touchdown (PAT)  | * 1 point from the 5-yard line, pass play only
* 2 points from the 10-yard line, run or pass

 Interceptions during PAT attempts and during overtime “shoot-outs” are live balls and may be returned for two-points regardless of the point value of the try. |
| Safety  | • 2 points  |

1. **Point After Touchdown (PAT):**
2. Following a touchdown, once the scoring team’s coach has informed an official of which point conversion choice they want to attempt the decision cannot be changed unless the scoring team uses a team timeout.
3. If a penalty occurs during an extra point attempt, the penalty will be assessed but the extra point value remains the same.
4. Point conversion choices cannot be changed after a penalty.
5. Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct and personal fouls during successful touchdown attempts will be assessed at half the distance to the goal during the PAT attempt (e.g., 2-point PAT attempts will be spotted at the 5-yard line and 1-point attempts at the 2 ½-yard line). All other defensive penalties may be declined by the offense and the score will stand. 5) Dead ball fouls committed by the offense that do not carry a loss-of-down penalty will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.
6. Fouls by the offense during a PAT attempt that carry a loss-of-down penalty (flag guarding, illegal advancement, illegal pass, etc.) will result in the PAT being “no good” and the attempt will not be repeated.
7. Fouls committed by the offense in unsuccessful PAT attempts will be declined by the defense and the PAT will be “no good” and will not be replayed.
8. Fouls simultaneous to the snap (illegal shift, illegal motion, etc.) if accepted, will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.
9. Fouls by the defense during an unsuccessful PAT attempt will result in a re-try after the options are administered. The offense may opt to accept or decline penalty yardage before the retry. 10) Interceptions on PATs may be returned by the defense for 2-points.

**3. Safeties: *(****Team A is the team that initiated the snap. Team B is the opponent that began the play on defense).*

1. A safety occurs when the ball becomes dead in Team A’s end zone or Team A commits a foul in their end zone.

Examples include:

* 1. Team A caused the ball to become dead in his own end zone (fumbles, muffed snap, incomplete backward pass)
	2. Team A player in possession of the ball has their flag pulled in their own end zone.
	3. Team A’s ball carrier goes out-of-bounds behind his own goal line.
	4. Team A commits a foul inside his own end zone.

1. Team B exceptions:

* 1. A flag pull immediately after an interception by Team B in the end zone is a touchback, not a safety.
	2. A Team B player going out-of-bounds behind the goal line immediately after an interception in the end zone is a touchback, not a Safety.
	3. If the ball is intercepted by Team B in the end zone and Team B fouls in the end zone prior to the ball being brought back into the field-of-play (example: flag guarding) the result of the play is a touchback and the foul will be administered from the touchback spot. This will not a safety.
	4. If the ball is intercepted Team B between the 5-yard line and the goal line and the player’s momentum takes them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead in Team B’s possession or Team B fouls in the end zone (example: flag guarding) the ball belongs to Team B and the penalty will be assessed from the spot where it was intercepted. It is not a touchback. It is not a safety.

**5. Mercy Rule:**

1. The mercy rule will be invoked if the score differential reaches 17 or more points during the final one minute of the second half or 34 or more points at half time or any time in the second half.
2. When this occurs the final score will be recorded as the score at the time the mercy rule was invoked. No more score recording will be done.
3. If both coaches agree the game may continue as a ‘scrimmage’ and a running clock will be used.
4. Officials reserve the right to end the game if teams or coaches are not acting in a sportsmanship like manner (ex: running up the score as punishment, trash-talking, rough play etc.) Please play and coach in the spirit of the league.

**RULE 6: CHALLENGE PROCEDURE**

1. Only the head coach may ask game officials about rule clarification and interpretations.
2. Generally, officials are happy to answer quick response questions during the game if they do not impede the game. The priority is to spot the ball then address questions without impeding the play clock.
3. If a head coach believes an official has made a procedural error they may call for a timeout. If the head official agrees that there has been a procedural error (e.g., wrong down, incorrect penalty yardage, improper rule interpretation, score recorded incorrectly et.) the procedural error will be addressed and the timeout will not be charged.
4. The challenge must be made to an official before the next snap.
5. In the event a head coach loses a procedural challenge and the team did not possess a legal team timeout a fifteen-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed to the head coach. If a coach receives two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties they will be disqualified and must leave the event.
6. Only procedural issues may be addressed, not an official’s judgment call or no-call.
7. If the challenging coach is unsatisfied with the game official’s ruling of the challenge and would like to elevate the challenge to Pick 6 Staff member in charge of the site, they may do so.
8. If the challenge is ultimately lost, the protesting team will lose all remaining timeouts in the game.
9. If the team doesn’t possess any timeouts at all they will be assessed an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. 10) If a challenge is ultimately won, the timeout will not be charged and the game will resume per normal clock mechanics and rules.

11) If a team insist on challenging a judgement call they will automatically lose the challenge. Field officials are encouraged to inform team coaches of this prior to a Pick 6 Staff member arriving.

**RULE 7: OFFENSE**

**1. General Offense:**

1. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped. After all players have ‘set’ one player may go ‘in motion’.
2. Any quick / abrupt movement by a single or multiple offensive players in unison, which simulates the snap, is a false start. This includes, but not limited to, a quarterback thrusting his hands forward when there is not a simultaneous snap. This is a judgement call.
3. All players must substitute from their sideline only. This allows the defense to be aware of their presence and avoids deceptive plays by the offense.
4. It is a dead ball foul if any player on offense enters the neutral zone before the snap. (neutral zone infraction).
5. The ball must be snapped between the center’s legs. (an exception is 2d grade and below).
6. ‘Center Sneaks’ are not allowed (Illegal Advancement). The ball must completely leave the center’s hands. The center must take at least two-steps forward or backward to receive a hand off or a pass.
7. Direct snaps are legal to any player not on the line-of-scrimmage. The player receiving the snap is considered the passer and cannot run the ball past the line-of-scrimmage.
8. Ball carriers may use backward passes and legal pitches anywhere on the field
9. The ball will be declared dead if any portion of the ball carrier’s body other than their hands or feet (knee, elbow, buttocks or ball-in-hand, etc.) touches the ground.
10. The offense is always responsible for retrieving the ball and returning it an official or to the line of scrimmage quickly at the end of each play.
11. For safety reasons, when players relay the ball to an official please use short underhand tosses. This protects other players and speeds the game along.

**2. Blocking / Illegal Screening:**

1. Blocking is obstructing or contact with an opponent with any part of body.
2. Illegal Screening is when an offensive player physically impedes the defender from getting to the player with the ball by abruptly step in the defender’s path or taking a position (less than two normal strides away) in a defender’s line of travel that forces the defender to veer around his opponent.
3. Physical-contact blocking (as seen in traditional football) and non-contact blocking ‘screen blocking’ (as seen in basketball) are not allowed even if unintentional. This is a difficult transition for traditional football players.
4. A penalty may be called even when an offensive player is accidentally obstructing a defender.
5. Offensive players must be aware that they may be penalized for blocking by simply chasing the play and providing an inadvertent block or screen.
6. Passers caught between a ball carrier and a rushing defender will not be considered to be screening if there is no clear and obvious attempt to be doing so.
7. ‘Pick plays’ (often seen in basketball) or ‘rub routes’ are not allowed as these plays are designed to initiate contact or to screen-out defenders. Receivers going down field after the snap may not initiate contact with an opponent.

**3. Impeding The Rusher:**

1. A legal rusher established behind the 10 yard rush line at the snap is entitled to a clear path to the passer and the offense may not impede the rusher in any way.
2. This path is set pre-snap as shown in the diagram below.
3. This clear path only applies to the path established at the snap. As the passer moves (ex: rolls to the right or left) the path does not flow with him. The path is only guaranteed at the snap and while the passer is in his initial position. 4) If an offensive player materially impedes a legal rusher without physical contact they may be called for Illegal Screening.
4. Determining if the rusher was materially impeded is a judgement call by the covering official.
5. If an offensive player impedes a rusher with physical contact they are guilty of blocking or illegal contact.
6. Offensive players that remain in their initial position after the snap are not considered to be screening (example C in the diagram below) and the rusher would have to go around them.

 

 R= Rusher(s), C=Center, QB=The passer (person initially taking the snap)

**4. Fumbles and Muffs:**

1. Fumbles are a “dead ball” when they hit the ground.
2. If a lateral, muffed or fumbled ball is intercepted before becoming dead it remains a “live ball”.
3. Forward fumbles that hit the ground will be marked where the ball carrier’s feet were the ball carrier lost control and not the spot where the ball hit the ground.
4. Backward fumbles are marked where they hit the ground.
5. Muffed snaps will be marked where the ball hit the ground.

**5. Running / Jumping / Diving:**

1. Ball carriers are allowed to slightly leave their feet, jump, and spin as evasive maneuvers in order to advance the ball as long as they do not put another player’s safety at risk. This is a judgment call by the game officials.
2. Not every insignificant jump or small hop constitutes a safety issue. This is a judgement call.
3. Jump cuts or advancing between two defenders is allowed if they do not initiate noteworthy contact with the defender or put another player’s safety at risk. This is a judgment call by the game officials.
4. Ball carriers may not hurdle over another player.
5. Ball carriers may not dive, lunge, or fall forward in a perceived intentional manner in order to advance the ball or achieve a line-to-gain. This is a judgment call.
6. Ball carriers may extend the ball out in front of them to gain additional yardage.
7. Diving by the defense to capture a ball carrier’s flag is legal. However, game officials may still make judgment calls about contact. Teaching Point: Play the flag, not the player’s body.
8. Ball carriers are allowed to slightly leave their feet, jump, and spin as evasive maneuvers in order to advance the ball as long as they do not put another player’s safety at risk. This is a judgment call by the game officials.
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14. Diving by the defense to capture a ball carrier’s flag is legal. However, game officials may still make judgment calls about contact. Teaching Point: Play the flag, not the player’s body.
15. If a defender trips a ball carrier while pursuing the offensive player from the rear and the ball carrier goes to the ground (typically seen in break-away plays), even if the defender is making a fair and reasonable attempt to capture the ball carrier flag, the defender will be called for illegal contact and may be disqualified or ejected.

Teaching Lesson: Coach our players to play safe.

1. Ball carriers must make every effort to avoid a defender who has established a stationary position (charging).
2. Runners may leave their feet to avoid collision or falling on another player. 11) Passers may jump vertically to throw the ball over a taller defender.
3. “No Run Zones” are enforced as a safety measure to discourage power-runs, diving, etc. near the goal line. When the ball is spotted inside a “No Run Zone” the offense must execute a forward passing that breaks the line-of-scrimmage.
4. Once the pass breaks the line-of-scrimmage the “No Run Zone” disappears and laterals, pitches, etc. may be used.
5. Ball carriers are allowed to slightly leave their feet, jump, and spin as evasive maneuvers in order to advance the ball as long as they do not put another player’s safety at risk. This is a judgment call by the game officials.
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10. Jump cuts or advancing between two defenders is allowed if they do not initiate noteworthy contact with the defender or put another player’s safety at risk. This is a judgment call by the game officials.
11. Ball carriers may not hurdle over another player.
12. Ball carriers may not dive, lunge, or fall forward in a perceived intentional manner in order to advance the ball or achieve a line-to-gain. This is a judgment call.
13. Ball carriers may extend the ball out in front of them to gain additional yardage.
14. Diving by the defense to capture a ball carrier’s flag is legal. However, game officials may still make judgment calls about contact. Teaching Point: Play the flag, not the player’s body.
15. If a defender trips a ball carrier while pursuing the offensive player from the rear and the ball carrier goes to the ground (typically seen in break-away plays), even if the defender is making a fair and reasonable attempt to capture the ball carrier flag, the defender will be called for illegal contact and may be disqualified or ejected.

Teaching Lesson: Coach our players to play safe.

1. Ball carriers must make every effort to avoid a defender who has established a stationary position (charging).
2. Runners may leave their feet to avoid collision or falling on another player. 11) Passers may jump vertically to throw the ball over a taller defender.
3. “No Run Zones” are enforced as a safety measure to discourage power-runs, diving, etc. near the goal line. When the ball is spotted inside a “No Run Zone” the offense must execute a forward passing that breaks the line-of-scrimmage.
4. Once the pass breaks the line-of-scrimmage the “No Run Zone” disappears and laterals, pitches, etc. may be used.

**6. Flag Guarding including Stiff-Arming:**

1. The ball carrier’s flags must be accessible to the defense throughout the play.
2. Flag guarding is the act of a ball carrier denying a defender the opportunity to capture their flag in any physical way.
3. Flags may not be tucked in pants, tucked under jerseys, worn improperly, looped around the waist belt, or knotted. 4) The ball carrier shall not flag guard by flailing of arms, using their hands, arms, elbows or extremely dipped shoulders to deny the opportunity of an opponent to remove a flag.
4. The ball carrier may not swat a defender’s hands away nor pin the flag against their body using the ball or hands.
5. An official may call flag guarding if they feel that a ball carrier’s natural running motion gave the ball carrier a decisive advantage over the defender and the running motion caused part of the ball carrier’s body to block a de-flagging attempt.
6. What constitutes flag guarding is up to the official’s judgment. We recommend you carry the ball with your hands held high on the body to avoid flag guarding. This is one of the most difficult transitions for traditional football players.
7. Flag guarding shall not be called if there is no defensive player within reasonable distance to capture the flag. 9) The ball carrier may bend at the knees to dip low, side cut, skip, or take short hops.
8. Extreme low dips (sometimes called a “duck-walk”) are legal and do not constitute flag guarding in themselves, as long as the flag carrier’s flags are still exposed and the defensive player isn’t physically impeded (i.e. the ball carrier isn’t using his arms, hands, shoulder, ball, etc. to impede the defender. Normally flag guarding can be avoiding while “duckwalking” when the ball carrier keeps his hands and elbows high on the body (ex: at shoulder-level).
9. No penalty will be called if a ball carrier simultaneously flag guards as the defender pulls the flag. Remind the player not to flag guard.
10. Tampering with the flag in any way to gain advantage is illegal.
11. Examples of flag guarding: stiff arming, pinning the flag, swatting, using the ball as a stiff arm, etc.



 E*xamples of flag guarding*

**7. Pass Plays:**

1. The 7-second verbal count of the pass clock used in previous season has been eliminated. Passers may now scramble from rushers indefinitely.
2. Only one forward pass per play.
3. Once the ball has passed the line-of-scrimmage it cannot be returned to behind the line-of-scrimmage and thrown forward legally.
4. If any portion of the passer’s body is behind the line-of-scrimmage when the ball is released, it is a legal pass.
5. A passer may jump vertically to throw the ball over a defender.
6. All players are eligible to receive a pass unless they have stepped out-of-bounds of their own accord.
7. Players may re-establish themselves in the field of play and catch the ball if another player has touched the ball first. When a player catches ball after stepping out-of-bounds it will be treated as an incomplete pass, no penalty and the down is consumed.

8 Any offensive player who receives either a forward or backward handoff behind scrimmage can pass the ball from behind the line-of-scrimmage.

1. If the passer’s flag has been pulled while the passer still has the ball in their hand, it is a sack. There is no allowance given for the passer’s arm being in motion at the time of the sack. Ball-in-hand at all equals a sack.
2. An underhand forward pass (shovel pass) is legal and if it is dropped, it is ruled an incomplete pass, not a fumble. 11) A backward pass that is dropped or incomplete is ruled a fumble and the down counts. The ball is spotted where it hit the ground.

12) If a pass is tipped or blocked by a defender and the passer catches the ball, the play is will be whistled dead. Remember, the passer cannot advance the ball through scrimmage.

1. **Batting:**

Any pass or fumble in flight that has not been grounded may be batted in any direction, by an eligible receiver, unless it is a backward pass batted forward by the passing team.

1. **Intentional Grounding:**

1. A passer may not throw the ball into the ground to avoid a loss of yardage or conserve time.
2. An exception to this rule is it is legal to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball to the ground immediately

(spiking) after receiving either a direct hand-to-hand snap or from the “shot-gun” formation.

1. The spike must be fluid and immediate after the snap or it is intentional grounding.
2. Passers may not throw the ball out-of-bounds to stop the clock as in NFL or NCAA games.

**10. Catches:**

1. A pass is completed when an offensive player simultaneously places at least one foot inbounds and maintains possession of the ball.
2. If the ball comes out of the receiver’s grasp due to contact with the ground or while going to the ground the pass is incomplete.
3. Simultaneous catches between a defensive and offensive player go to the offense.
4. In the event of a bobbled catch, i.e., the ball is batted about by the receiver in an attempt to catch it, and the intended receiver is de-flagged before taking full possession there is no penalty for early flag pull.
5. Whether or not a ball is tipped or touched in the air has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls anywhere on the field (roughing, personal fouls, illegal contact, etc.).
6. If a receiver steps out-of-bounds of their own accord and is the first to touch a pass, it is an incomplete pass.

**RULE 8: DEFENSE**

**1. General Defense:**

1. Stripping or attempting to strip the ball from a player’s hand, including the quarterback, is illegal.
2. Defensive teams may not attempt to confuse the offensive team by simulating their pre-snap signals or cadence. 3) There are no “free plays” for the offense. After the game official blows the ready-for-play whistle and the snapper puts their hand(s) on the ball, no player may enter the neutral zone until the ball is moved to start the snap.

**2. Rushing the Passer:**

1. Before each play is allowed to begin an official will mark off a 10-yard rush line.
2. Defensive players that ‘rush the passer’ must begin the play at this ten-yard mark or further away from the line-of scrimmage.
3. The rushing defensive player must have a clear path to the passer and any interference by the offense to impede his initial path will consider screening or blocking if physical contact is made (see Impeding the Rusher).
4. Players not rushing the passer may defend the line-of-scrimmage but not enter the backfield unless the ball is handed off or touches another player.
5. If the ball makes contact (touches) any player other than the player that took the snap, the defense is eligible to cross the line-of-scrimmage.
6. The offense may not use any deceptive measures to ‘trick’ the defense to rush early (i.e. hiding or obscuring the ball or having both the passer and another player run with the ball simultaneously as seen in run-pass-options). The benefit of the doubt will be given to the defense when the offense attempts to use deceptive measures and they will not be penalized for crossing the line-of-scrimmage.
7. A defensive player that *insignificantly crosses* the rush line before the snap and immediately self-corrects and returns to his side of the rush line before he rushes is not penalized. Think ‘re-set’.
8. A defensive player that *insignificantly* crosses the line-of-scrimmage after the snap and immediately self-corrects and returns to his side of the line-of-scrimmage is not penalized. Think ‘re-set’

**3. Roughing the Passer:**

1. Defensive players must make a concerted effort to avoid charging into the passer.
2. During the passer’s drop and his throwing motion the passer cannot be touched above the upper waist in any material way. 3) Defenders cannot materially touch any part of the passer’s arm, hand, shoulder, or ball while the ball is still in the passer’s hand. The ball is considered an extension of the passer’s arm and hand.
3. To assist defensive players to avoid unnecessary contact with the passer the covering official will endeavor, but is not required, to announce “balls away” or some other helpful phrase when the ball has left the passer’s hand.
4. Defensive players may not “crash” the passer’s throwing arm, shoulder or body even if the ball is touched first.
5. An insignificant “brush-by” may be allowed by the game official but is not guaranteed. This is a judgement call. 7) Making contact with the passer while blocking or attempting to block a pass may result in a roughing the passer penalty.
6. Whether or not a ball is tipped in the air has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls (roughing, personal fouls, etc.).
7. A roughing penalty will not be enforced if a passer initiates contact with a defensive player while in the throwing motion; for example, during the passer’s follow through the passer’s arm makes contact with a defensive opponent’s hand, arm, or shoulder. In this instance the impetus of the contact is the action of the passer and not the defender. This is a judgment call.
8. It is a personal foul if the passer’s follow through hand or arm makes significant contact with an opponent’s head, neck or face (Personal Foul, Contact above the Shoulders). This is a judgement call.
9. If roughness is habitual per a single player disqualification or ejection procedures may apply.
10. If roughness is habitual per a team forfeiture procedures may apply.

**4. Flag Pulling Mechanics:**

1. Flag pulling is the legal removal of a flag from an opponent in possession of the ball.
2. Legal flag pulls must begin with the hands leading toward the opponent’s hips and flags.
3. No player has the right to over-aggressively ‘body up’, ‘wrap up’, ‘play through’, ‘bull rush’, charge, spear or lead with a shoulder against an opponent even to capture a flag.

4 Pushing out on the sidelines is not permitted unless the defense was making a fair, legal, and reasonable attempt to pull the ball carrier’s flags, i.e. the defender’s hands were aimed low at the ball carrier’s hips and flags and not high up on the body.

1. Pushing, striking, holding, slapping or tripping while attempting to pull a flag is not permitted.
2. Defenders may dive when attempting to pull flags.
3. A defensive player may not pull the flag of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
4. Any defensive player who removes the flag from an offensive ball carrier is encouraged to show good sportsmanship and hold the flag above their head to assist the officials in locating the spot where the capture occurred.
5. Players may be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct for throwing, spiking, obscuring, or delaying the ball carrier in recovering their pulled flag.
6. If a ball carrier’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play the ball carrier will be ruled down.
7. If a receiver has an incomplete flag belt when they catch the ball the play will be called dead where the receiver caught the ball. No one-hand touch requirements, etc.
8. When a ball carrier flag guards and a defensive player pulls the ball carrier’s flag simultaneously, no penalty will be called for flag guarding.
9. A missing flag belt is a violation not a penalty and will not delay the game or stop a live play.

**5. Pass Coverage / Interference:**

1) Pass interference normally occurs above the waist; entangled feet are not considered pass interference. 2) Incidental contact is not considered pass interference.

1. A player may “find” their opponent by reaching out and placing a hand on him/her as long as touching does not delay or impede him/her. This is not considered pass interference.
2. Contact away from the direction of the pass is not considered pass interference but may be a separate foul. 5) Examples of pass interference include:
	1. Shoving or pushing off to create separation.
	2. Playing through the back of an opponent.
	3. Hook and turn: grabbing the torso and turning an opponent before the pass arrives.
	4. Not playing the ball: the defender is looking at the receiver and contact materially impedes the receiver.
	5. Arm bars, hooking, restricting, grabbing wrists, or turning a receiver.
	6. Blocking downfield before the ball has been touched, commonly seen through “pick plays”.
	7. Cutting off the path of a receiver by being in front of them and slowing down or being beside them and “riding” them off their path to the ball.
3. Whether a pass is catchable or uncatchable has no bearing on pass interference.
4. A player may use their arms or hands to intentionally obstruct the receiver’s view (face guarding) of the ball without turning their own head to play the ball as long as contact is not made with the receiver.

**6. Interceptions:**

1. Intercepted passes remain live and may be returned for a touchdown and earn a PAT attempt.
2. Intercepted passes during Point After Touchdown (PAT) attempts may be returned for 2-points.
3. In the event of an interception, the intercepting team must secure the ball with “clean hands,” i.e., they must not have committed a foul before or simultaneous to the interception.
4. If the intercepting team gained the interception with “clean hands” they will be awarded a first down where the ball becomes dead (flag pull, stepping out-of-bounds, fumbled, etc.)
5. Fouls by the intercepting team after an interception will be assessed from the spot of the foul.
6. Fouls by the intercepted team after the interception will be assessed at the end of the run.

**RULE 9: OVERTIME “THREE-PLAY SHOOT-OUT” FORMAT**

**1. General Overtime Rules:**

1. If regulation time ends in a tie, teams will play a three play “shoot out” series until a winner is determined.
2. Teams will get three plays per overtime period to score as many points as they can and determine a winner. 3) Teams may elect to go for one point (from the 5-yard line) or two points (from the 10-yard line), unless moved by penalty.

**2. Overtime Procedure:**

1. Only one coin toss is used during overtime regardless of the number of overtime periods played.
2. For winning the coin toss, a team may choose offense or defense.
3. If additional overtime periods are played, teams will alternate choices (ex: the winner of the overtime coin toss chooses defense and there is another overtime period played the loser of the overtime coin toss would then get to choose).
4. The game officials will choose which direction the overtime periods will be played.
5. The goal line shall always be the line-to-gain in overtime, regardless of the number of overtimes played.

6 Each team is allowed one timeout in overtime regardless of how many overtime periods are played.

1. Penalties and play are administered as it is during regulation time.
2. Point conversion choices cannot be changed after a penalty.
3. Interceptions during a “shoot-out” scoring attempts are live balls and may be returned for two-points regardless of the point value of the try.
4. Interceptions count against the offenses’ number of “shoot-out” plays for each overtime period.

**3. Resetting the Line-of-Scrimmage**

1. After an successful or unsuccessful attempt to score the coach will be asked if he would like his next attempt to be for one point (from the 5-yard line) or for two points (from the 10-yard line), unless moved by penalty.
2. This will be the procedure until the team reaches their three play attempts.
3. Teams will not be awarded yardage from previous plays, the ball will be reset for each attempt on either the 5-yard line or the 10-yard line unless moved by penalty in accordance with the coach’s choice.
4. Penalties that carry an automatic first down (ex: Roughing the Passer) will be administered in the same manner as during regulation play (i.e. half the distance to the goal and an automatic first down. Which in this case will be a replay of the down.