

Official Flag Football Rules

Special Olympics

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Note: Bold and Underlined rules in this handbook indicate new rules or rules that need extra attention.

Italicized rules in this handbook indicate new language for an existing rule.

Unified modifications are highlighted in grey.

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for flag football shall govern all Special Olympics North America competitions, including Special Olympics USA Games. Competition Committees for local tournaments and competitions may modify certain rules to fit local provisions and needs, so long as the spirit of the rule is not compromised.

Special Olympics has created these rules based upon rules from a national flag football organization.

I. The Game

MODIFIED EVENTS Individual Skills Competition	TRADITIONAL EVENTS Traditional Team	UNIFIED EVENTS Unified Team

A. Special Olympics flag football is non-contact.
1. In all aspects of Special Olympics flag football, rulings shall be made with player safety as the primary consideration.

B. The games shall be played between two (2) teams of five (5) players. Five (5) players are required to start the game.
1. Traditional Teams
   a. Allowable roster size is at the discretion of the competition committee. At Special Olympics USA Games, the team roster may contain a maximum of ten (10) players.
   b. Teams shall field five (5) players to start the game (required).
   c. Teams may continue with a minimum of four (4) players, if necessary, due to disqualification or injury. The game may continue with fewer players if the team has a chance to win (at the discretion of game officials).
2. Special Olympics Unified Sports Teams
   a. The team roster may contain a maximum of ten (12) players.
   b. The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners. *For example, six (6) athletes and four (4) partners OR seven (7) athletes and five (5) partners.*
   c. Five (5) players are required to start the game: three (3) athletes and two (2) partners, or four (4) athletes and one (1) partner.
      i The line-up shall never exceed three (3) athletes and two (2) partners.
      ii Disqualification or injury. The game may continue with fewer players if the team has a chance to win (at the discretion of game officials). A minimum of one (1) athlete and one (1) partner is required on the field.
      iii . Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.
3. Substitutions (athlete for athlete/partner for partner)
   a. Any player on the roster may enter upon the completion of a play (dead ball).
   b. Each substitute must play at least one (1) down before being replaced.
   c. A replaced player must leave the field immediately.

C. Points of Emphasis
1. No team shall repeatedly commit penalties/fouls which halve the distance to the goal line.
2. Neither team shall commit any act which, in the opinion of the referee, tends to make a travesty of the game. This includes intentionally committing penalties/fouls to gain an advantage.
3. The referee will enforce any penalty they consider equitable, including the award of a score for an unfair act.

D. Coin Toss
1. A coin toss determines first possession.
2. Each team will provide two (2) captains.
3. The officials and team captains will meet three (3) minutes before the start of the contest to conduct the coin toss.
   a. The visiting team captain will be given the choice of heads or tails before the toss.
   b. The winner of the coin toss shall have the first choice of options for the half or shall defer their option to the second half. The options for each half are as follows:
      i . To choose whether their team will start on offense or defense.
      ii To choose the goal their team will defend.

E. Possessions

1. All possessions, except following an interception, start at the offensive team's 5-yard line.
2. The offense has four (4) downs to cross mid-field.
3. Once the offense crosses mid-field, they have four (4) additional downs to score a touchdown.
4. If the offensive team fails to cross mid-field or score a touchdown in a prescribed number of downs, possession of the ball changes and the opposite team starts at their 5-yard line.
5. The ball carrier may not dive, hurdle, stiff arm, or use either arm to shield a defender from grasping their flag.
6. *Forward progress is marked at the forward point of the ball*, not the player, when the ball becomes dead by rule (ball carrier's flag belt is pulled or hand/knee touches ground, whistle sounds, etc.).

II. Equipment & Uniforms

A. Equipment

1. Ball: Teams shall play with a pebble-grained leather or rubber-covered ball in **regular** or *intermediate/youth* football sizes.
2. Mouthpiece: A protective mouthpiece must always be worn.
3. Flag Belt: Each player should wear a one-piece quick-release belt, without any knots, at the waistline with three (3) flags permanently attached, one (1) flag on each side and one (1) in the center of the back. The belt must have a spring-loaded clip.



B. Uniforms

1. **All participants must have shirts that are uniform or comparable in color and style**
   a. Shirts must *be numbered on the* front and back and able to be tucked in at the waist to avoid obstruction of flag pulling. Athletes wear even numbers, and partners wear odd numbers.
   b. All players must wear athletic shorts/pants without pockets.
      i **. Shorts/pants shall be of contrasting color to flags**
      ii . No *denim* will be allowed.
2. Players must wear rubber-cleated or flat-soled athletic shoes.
   a. Metal cleats, spikes, hiking boots, or other equipment deemed dangerous by officials will not be allowed.
3. No jewelry (rings, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, etc.) or hats with hard bills may be worn.
4. Sunglasses should be non-rigid and pliable. Players wearing eyewear are strongly encouraged to utilize an eyewear strap that helps hold the glasses in place.
5. The referee shall not permit any team member to wear equipment or apparel which, in his/her judgment, is dangerous or confusing to other players or is not appropriate. Reasonable accommodation can be made for unique or extenuating circumstances. The accommodation should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to participants or place opponents at a disadvantage.

III. Terminology

Player & Team Designations	
Center	Players who snap the ball to the quarterback through their legs **or to the side** to begin play.
Defense	The team opposed the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Passer	The offensive player who throws the ball and who may or may not be the quarterback.
Quarterback	The offensive player who first receives the snap and possession of the ball. (The quarterback may not run the ball through the line of scrimmage.)
Rusher	The defensive player(s) assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent them from passing the ball by pulling their flags or by blocking the pass.
Field Terms	
Downs (1,2,3,4)	*Attempts by the offense to advance the ball. The offense has four (4) downs to cross mid-field. Once the offense crosses mid-field, they have four (4) additional downs to score a touchdown.*
Line of Scrimmage	An imaginary line running through the forward point of the football and across the width of the field.
No Run Zones	Areas of the field where teams can only pass the ball.
Out of Bounds	The outer perimeter line of the field. They include the sidelines and the end lines. A player is out of bounds when any part of the person is touching anything that is on or outside an end or sideline.
Rush Line	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage on the defensive side.
Ball Status	
Dead Ball	Refers to the period immediately before or after the play.
Live Ball	A live ball is a ball in play. A ball becomes live when it is legally snapped, and a down is in progress. Generally used regarding penalties, live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
Passing	
Backward Pass	A pass thrown with its initial direction parallel with or towards the goal line where the defense would score (illegal). Also known as a lateral pass or pitch.
Forward Pass	A pass thrown, *either over- or underhanded,* with its initial direction towards the goal line where the offense is trying to score.
Handoff	Transferring possession from one (1) teammate to another without throwing, tossing, or kicking (only permitted behind the line of scrimmage).
Playing Terms	
Defer	The winner of the coin toss is giving the choice to the other team for the first half of the game. The winner of the coin toss gets the choice in the second half.
Flag Guarding	An 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.
Fumble	A loss of player possession other than by handoff or pass *(dead when ball contacts ground*).
Inadvertent Whistle	Official's whistle that is blown in error.
Shift	A shift is simultaneous movement by two (2) or more offensive players before the snap.
Unsporting Conduct	A rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

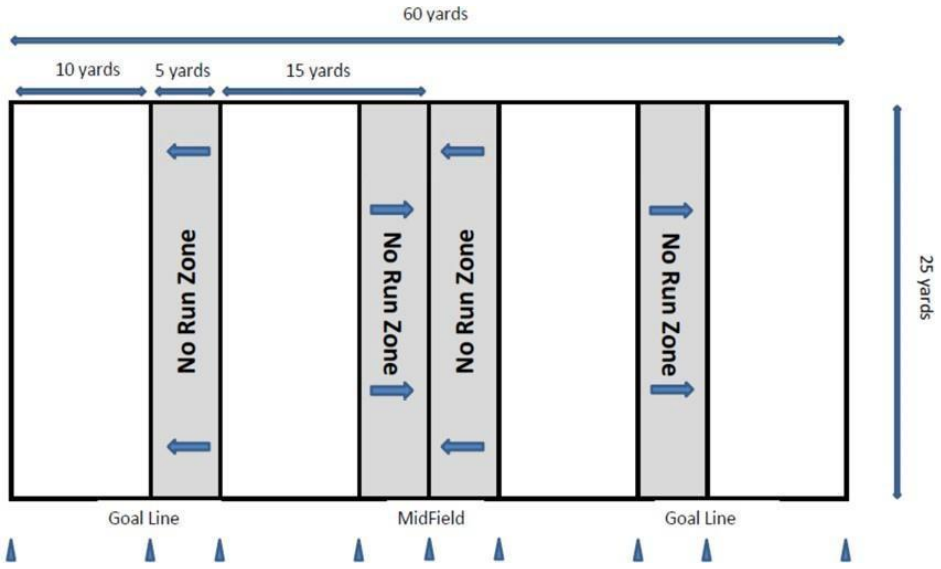
IV. Field

A. The playing field is sixty (60) yards long (including the end zones) and twenty-five (25) yards wide.
1. A space of at least five (5) yards around the field must be free and clear of obstructions.
    a. If insufficient space is available, a slightly smaller space can be used.
2. The field can be marked with chalk, paint, and/or traffic cones.

B. No-run zones exist five (5) yards before the midfield line and the end zone.
1. When the line of scrimmage *is on or* in the no-run zone, teams cannot run the ball.
    a. All plays must be passing plays, even if there is a handoff.
        i Players may run the ball after successfully receiving a pass.
    b. Each offensive team approaches only two (2) no-run zones in each drive:
        i Before midfield to gain the first down.
        ii Before the end zone, five (5) yards from the goal line to score a touchdown.
2. No run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays.

C. Stepping on a boundary line is considered out of bounds.

Diagram of Special Olympics Flag Football Field



V. Timing & Overtime

A. Game Length
1. Standard Timing
   a. The game shall consist of two (2) 20-minute halves (running clock) until the last (1) minute of each half.
   b. During the last (1) minute of each half, the clock:
      i Stops for: incomplete passes, scoring plays, changes of possession, out of bounds, or first downs.
      ii Restarts on the snap.
      iii Does not start for extra point attempts (untimed down).
2. Quick Timing Option
   a. The game shall consist of two (2) 20-minute halves (running clock).
3. Selecting a Timing Option
   a. The tournament director will identify which timing method will be used before State/Provincial/National competitions based on Program needs, facility availability, and number of teams attending.
   b. Only one (1) option may be used during the competition unless changed by weather.

B. General Timing
1. **Each team receives two (2) 60-second time-outs per game.**
   a. The clock will stop for all time and restart on the snap.
2. There shall be a 5-minute halftime.
3. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion (injuries, delays, etc.).
4. Delay of game will be called if the ball is not put in play promptly and legally or for any action or lack of action by either team that tends to prevent play.
   a. Consuming more than 30 seconds to snap the ball after it is ready for play.
   b. Interrupting the 30-second count for any reason except for a granted time-out.
   c. Failing to remove an injured player for whom the game clock was stopped.
   d. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.

C. Overtime
1. Occurs if the score is tied at the end of regulation play.
2. All regulation rules and penalties are in effect during overtime.
3. There are no time-outs.
4. A coin toss is held to determine first possession (called by the home team).
5. Each team receives two (2) downs beginning at midfield to score or gain the most yards.
   a. If the team with the first attempt in overtime scores on the first play, the opposing team must score on its first play also. There are no attempts at extra points in overtime.
   b. If both teams score a touchdown, or gain the same yardage, the procedure is repeated until one (1) team wins.
      i Teams will alternate possessions towards the same goal until there is a winner if there are multiple overtimes.
         • The team that started with the first overtime possession will possess the ball second in the next overtime.
   c. The team gaining the most points or gaining the most yards is awarded one (1) extra point to the tied score and wins the game.
   d. Exceptions to this rule are as follows:
      i Interception: The team that intercepts the pass automatically wins the game.

VI. Scoring

A. Touchdown: six (6) points.
B. Extra Point
1. One (1) point from the 6-yard line.
2. Two (2) points from the 12-yard line.
3. Penalty enforcement will change the spot of the attempt, not the point value of the extra point attempt.

C. Safety: two (2) points.
1. A safety is scored when the ball becomes dead in the defense's end zone.

D. Mercy Rule: If a team is up twenty-five (25) or more points in the last minute of the game, the clock will continue to run.

VII. Coaches' Expectations

A. Coaches are typically volunteer parents, friends, or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are strongly encouraged always to support the coach.
B. Coaches are expected to adhere to the Special Olympics rules and philosophies, coaches' guidelines, and code of conduct.
C. Coaches must have the following certifications to participate:
1. Coaches Volunteer Orientation/General Orientation.
2. Updated Online Protective Behavior (OPB).
3. Background check.
4. Attend Flag Football Training.

D. Injured player: An injured or apparently injured player who an official discovers while the ball is dead, and the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least one (1) down unless halftime or overtime intermission occurs. A player who is bleeding, has an open wound, or has any amount of blood on their uniform shall be considered an injured player.
1. Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.

VIII. Live Ball & Dead Ball

A. Live Ball
1. A live ball is a ball in play. A ball becomes live when it is legally snapped, and a down is in progress. Generally used regarding penalties, live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

B. Dead Ball
1. Refers to the period immediately before or after the play.
2. Play is ruled dead when:
   a. The ball carrier's flag is pulled.
   b. The ball carrier loses their flag.
   c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
   d. Any part of the ball carrier's body other than the feet or hands touches the ground. i. When in player possession, the ball is considered an extension of the hand.
   e. A touchdown, extra point, or safety is scored.
   f. When a forward pass strikes the ground.
   g. When a forward pass is caught simultaneously by opposing players (the offense retains possession).

h. An offensive receiver without a flag belt catches a ball.
i. A snapped ball touches the ground.
j. *A fumbled ball hits the ground.*
   i If fumbled forward, the ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble.
   ii If the ball falls backward, it is marked where it hits the ground.
k. When there is an inadvertent whistle (official's whistle that is blown in error).
   i In case of an inadvertent whistle, the team in possession of the ball may choose to accept the result of the play at the point where the inadvertent whistle was blown or choose to replay the down.

IX. Running the Ball

A. Running

1. The quarterback (first player gaining possession of the snap) cannot advance the ball across the line of scrimmage at any point during a down even if a legal handoff has occurred (illegal procedure).
2. Ball carriers MUST try to avoid defenders with an established position.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are legal.
   a. Direct handoffs may be forward, backward, or to the side of the quarterback/offensive player but must occur behind the line of scrimmage.
      A handoff is transferring possession from one (1) teammate to another without throwing, tossing, or kicking the ball.
   b. The offense may have unlimited handoffs until the ball crosses the line of scrimmage.
      i The player who takes a handoff can pass the ball if they do not cross the line of scrimmage.
      ii Any player other than the quarterback receiving a handoff behind the line of scrimmage is eligible to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, unless snapped in a no-run zone.
   c. Unified Sports®: a handoff can occur between any combination of players behind the line of scrimmage.
      i Combinations include athlete-to-partner, partner-to-athlete, athlete-to-athlete, partner-to-partner.
   d. "Center Sneak" – The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap, and they must step backward off the line of scrimmage to receive the direct handoff from the quarterback/offensive player before advancing the ball.
4. The ball is marked at the spot where the forward point of the ball is when the player is declared down (ball carrier's flag belt is pulled, or hand/knee touches ground).
5. The ball carrier may not dive, hurdle, stiff arm, or use either arm to shield a defender from grasping their flag.
   a. Hurdling
      i Jumping over or attempting to jump over a player by the ball carrier to prevent being downed or to gain additional yardage is illegal.
         i Note: Jumping over a player who is on the ground to avoid injury, by official's judgment, is legal.
   b. Flag Guarding
      i .Runners shall not shield (flag guard) by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny an opponent the opportunity to pull or remove their flag belt, including:
         - Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt.
         - Stiff arms.
         - Placing the ball in a position over the flag belt.
         - Lowering the shoulders or arm over the flag belt.
      ii Contact must occur for a flag guarding penalty to be called.

B. No Run Zones
1. Located 5 yards before the mid-field line and goal line.
   a. Any ball snapped from on or in these zones must be passed.
   b. The purpose of no-run zones is to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations.
   c. If a runner breaks the line of scrimmage before being passed in a no-running zone, it is an illegal procedure penalty.
   d. Penalties can move teams in and out of no run zones.

X. Passing & Receiving

A. Passing and Receiving by the offense
1. All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
   a. Backward passes (laterals or pitches) are illegal regardless of field location.
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. All players are eligible to receive a forward pass, even the quarterback following a legal handoff.
   a. Unified Sports® exception: if a partner throws a pass, only athletes are eligible receivers. No partner-to-partner passes.
      i Unified Sports® teams are expected to comply with this rule without intervention by officials.
         - Coaches or designated captains should report a violation to the official immediately.
         - Failure to self-patrol will be considered unsporting and will be penalized accordingly.
   b. If a player steps out of bounds, they may not be the first player to touch the ball.
4. Only one (1) offensive player is allowed in motion but may not be moving toward the line of scrimmage at the snap.
5. A player must have at least one (1) foot in bounds when making a catch.
6. **Interceptions may be returned for positive yards by the intercepting player**.

B. Diving
1. A defensive or offensive player may dive to catch a pass.
2. Diving is illegal when used to down a player or to gain extra yards (personal foul).

XI. Rushing the Quarterback

A. All defensive players who rush the quarterback must be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.
1. A special marker, placed by the official, will designate the spot seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage
2. If a rusher crosses the rush line early (within 7 yards from the line of scrimmage at snap), they may return to the rush line, reset, and then legally rush the quarterback.

B. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.

C. Once the quarterback hands off the ball, all defenders are eligible to rush.

XII. Screen Blocking

A. Legally obstructing an opponent without using any part of the body to initiate contact. May not impede progress of a defensive player with contact.

B. The screen blocker shall have their arms extended to the ground at their side, in front, or behind the back. Arms may also be crossed over the chest with hands near the shoulders.

C. A player shall not hold, push, charge, trip, or impede the progress of an opponent by extending arms, elbows, shoulders, hips, knees, or by bending/leaning their body into other than a normal position. Nor should they use any rough tactics.

D. A player must be on their feet before, during, and after screen blocking.
E. Screen blocking is the only form of legal blocking that any player can use.
1. Backfield Blocking (behind the line of scrimmage)
    a. If any of the provisions listed are violated, and contact results, the screener has committed an illegal block.
        i The screen blocker must give an opponent at least one (1) step.
        ii The screen blocker must not initiate contact with the opponent.
        iii The screen blocker may not take a position so close to a moving opponent that this opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing directions.
        iv After assuming a legal screen blocking position, a player may move to maintain it, unless they move into an opponent and create contact.
2. Downfield Blocking (during a run)
    a. A basketball style (non-moving) screen is the only acceptable form of downfield blocking.
    b. The blocker may not run between a defender and ball carrier in a manner that impedes a defender's progress to the flag.

XIII. Flag Pulling

A. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
B. A flag is considered pulled when the clip is no longer attached to the opposite side of the belt.
C. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who does not have the ball (penalty).
D. It is illegal to pull or strip the ball from the carrier's possession at any time (penalty).
E. If a player's flag belt inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball, and the play ends.
F. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defense's access to the flags through contact by stiff arming, dropping the head or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.
1. The ball carrier may not dive, hurdle, stiff arm, or use either arm to shield a defender from grasping their flag.
2. *Contact must occur for a flag guarding penalty to be called.*
G. Defenders may not dive to pull flags. (illegal procedure)
H. The official may pull flag belts after a score, to show it was legally secured.

XIV. Formations

A. Line of Scrimmage
1. The line of scrimmage for each team is a vertical plane through the point of the ball nearest the team's goal line.
2. Each player on a team must be on their side of the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
B. Motion
1. Only one (1) offensive player may be in motion at the snap.
    a. This player must be behind the line of scrimmage and not moving toward the line of scrimmage at the time the ball is snapped.
        i Before going into motion, the player must be set for one (1) second.
    b. All other offensive players must be stationary in their positions at the snap.
C. Shift
1. A shift occurs when more than one offensive player is in motion simultaneously before the snap.
    a. Players must become set for one (1) second prior to the snap or going into motion.
    b. It is a penalty if the ball is snapped when more than one player is in motion (illegal shift).

D. The Snap
1. The ball may be snapped between the center's legs or to the side.
   a. The snapper's feet must be behind the line of scrimmage.
   b. The snapper shall transfer the ball from its position on the ground in a continuous motion to the quarterback to legally start a play.
   c. The snapper is the only player required on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.
2. No member of the offensive team may simulate the start of the play before the ball is snapped (delay of game).

XV. Unified Sports®

A. Unified Sports® roster
1. The team roster may contain a maximum of ten (12) players.
2. The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners. For example, six (6) athletes and four (4) partners OR seven (7) athletes and five (5) partners.
3. Five (5) players are required to start the game: three (3) athletes and two (2) partners or four (4) athletes and one (1) partner.
   a. The line-up shall never exceed three (3) athletes and two (2) partners.
   b. Teams may continue with a minimum of four (4) players (minus one (1) partner or athlete) due to disqualification or injury. The game may continue with fewer players if the team has a chance to win. A minimum of one (1) athlete and one (1) partner is required on the field.
   c. Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.

B. Each team shall have a non-playing coach responsible for the line-up and conduct of the team during competition.

C. Partners may NOT pass to another partner.
1. If a partner throws a pass, only athletes are eligible receivers.
2. Unified Sports® teams are expected to comply with this rule without intervention by officials.
   a. Coaches or *designated captains* should report a violation to the official immediately.
   b. Failure to self-patrol will be considered unsporting and will be penalized accordingly.

D. A handoff can occur between any combination of players behind the line of scrimmage.
1. Combinations include athlete-to-partner, partner-to-athlete, athlete-to-athlete, partner-to-partner.

E. All teams are expected to adhere to and perform under the Special Olympics Unified Sports® Principle of Meaningful Involvement.
1. Ensures that every player is allowed to contribute to the success of their team through their unique skills and qualities. This means every teammate will:
   a. Demonstrate sufficient sport-specific skills and game understanding.
   b. Play a valued role on the team that emphasizes their personal talents.
   c. Play without a heightened risk of injury.

XVI. Penalties

A. A coach or designated captain will have the opportunity to decline or accept the penalty based on the result of the play.
1. Officials may not ask for a decision when the penalty enforcement is obvious.
2. The yardage may be declined when accepting a penalty.

B. All penalties are assessed from the line of scrimmage.
1. Penalties occurring after the dead ball will be assessed from the new line of scrimmage.

C. No penalty may take the ball more than half the distance to the offender's goal line.

Offense Pre-Snap/Simultaneous with Snap Penalties (Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay down)	
Delay of Game	Failing to snap within 30 seconds of the ready-for-play whistle.
Illegal Motion	Moving forward at the snap; snap not in one (1) motion.
Illegal Shift	More than one (1) player moving at the snap.
Offsides	• Beyond the line of scrimmage at the snap. • False start.
Offense Post-Snap Penalties (Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down)	
Flag Guarding	Warding off or shielding a flag pull through contact.
Illegal Contact	Setting a pick, holding, illegal blocking, bumping, stiff arming.
Illegal Pass (Backward)	All backward passes/pitches regardless of field location.
Illegal Pass (Forward)	• Pass not completed beyond line of scrimmage. • Passer's foot is beyond line of scrimmage when passing. • Two (2) forward passes in a down. • Intentionally grounding the ball.
Illegal Pass (Unified)	Unified: Partner-to-partner pass.
Illegal Procedure	• Quarterback runs. • Handoff beyond the line of scrimmage. • Diving. • Hurdling.
Pass Interference	Contact that interferes with a receiver.
Unsporting Conduct – Offensive (Ten (10) yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down)	
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Poor behavior.
Defensive Pre-Snap/Simultaneous with Snap Penalties (Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay down)	
Delay of Game	Disconcerting signals or other illegal action that causes delay
Offsides/*Encroachment*	Beyond the line of scrimmage at the snap or *crossing the line of scrimmage before snap*
Defensive Post-Snap Penalties (Five (5) yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down)	
Illegal Contact	Holding, blocking, bumping, stripping the ball, roughing the passer.
Illegal Procedure	• Rushing quarterback inside seven (7) yards. • Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball). • Diving to pull a flag.
Pass Interference	Contact that interferes with a receiver.
Unsporting Conduct – Defensive (Ten (10) yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down)	
Unsporting Conduct	Poor behavior.

XVII. Unsporting Conduct

A. Unsporting Conduct/Rough Play

1. The officials may disqualify any individual (coach or player) who participates in an excessively rough or unsporting behavior, even if it is the individual's first unsporting conduct penalty.
2. Tackling is a disqualification (tackling the runner by grasping or encircling with the hands or arms and taking the opponent towards the ground as in tackling football).
3. Dead ball fouls (intentionally kicking the ball, spiking the ball, throwing the ball high into the air).
4. Prohibited acts (attempting to influence officials, disrespectfully addressing an official, indicating objections to an official's decision, being on the field illegally, intentionally contacting an official, leaving the sideline during a fight, refusal to comply or abide by the request or decision of an official, using words similar to the offensive audibles, leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage, participate while wearing illegal player equipment).
   a. Using profanity, taunting, insulting, or vulgar language or gestures.
5. No warning is required.
6. Two (2) unsporting conduct penalties for an individual result in disqualification; four (4) unsporting conduct penalties on a team in a game result in a forfeit. Accumulation of numerous unsporting conduct fouls over multiple games by an individual or team may result in disqualification by the sports management.

XVIII. Rule Change Summary

Added/Modified language:

- Equipment & Uniforms
  - All participants must have shirts that are uniform or comparable in color and style
  - Shorts/pants shall be of contrasting color to flags
- Terminology
  - Downs: Attempts by the offense to advance the ball. The offense has four (4) downs to cross mid-field. Once the offense crosses mid-field, they have four (4) additional downs to score a touchdown.
  - Forward Pass: A pass thrown, either over- or underhanded, with its initial direction towards the goal line where the offense is trying to score.
  - Fumble: A loss of player possession other than by handoff or pass (dead when ball contacts ground).
- Timing & Overtime
  - Each team receives two (2) 60-second time-outs per game.
- Live Ball & Dead Ball
  - **ii** Any part of the ball carrier's body other than the feet or hands touches the ground. When in player possession, the ball is considered an extension of the hand.
- Passing & Receiving
  - Interceptions may be returned for positive yards by the intercepting player.
- Rushing the Quarterback
  - If a rusher crosses the rush line early (within 7 yards from the line of scrimmage at snap), they may return to the rush line, reset, and then legally rush the quarterback.
- Flag Pulling
  - A flag is considered pulled when the clip is no longer attached to the opposite side of the belt.
- Penalties
  - Defensive Delay of Game (Pre-Snap)
    - Disconcerting signals or other illegal action that causes delay

Deleted Items:

- Equipment & Uniforms
  - Defensive players are not required to wear a flag belt **(defensive players need to wear a flag belt).**
- Terminology
  - Shovel Pass: A legal pass received beyond the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot-put manner.
- Timing & Overtime
  - An unused time-out from the first half does not carry over to the second half.

XIX. Officials Motions

