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RULE 1: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

1. OUR GOVERNING PHILOSOPHY

- Our mission is to provide a superior football experience to our players, coaches, and spectators.
- Remind yourself and others that no college scholarships are handed out today, so just relax and enjoy.
- We retain the right to amend, update, or edit these rules as situations require without notice.
- This document uses the pronouns he, his, and him for readability and is not an act of gender bias, the program seeks and encourages inclusive participation.

2. OUR GAME OFFICIALS

- Many of our officials are young people learning the craft. Please treat them with respect.
- Our officials administer the rules of this league not any other organization past or present.
- Our officials are encouraged to use the “preventative style” of officiating which allows them to talk to, remind, and help players avoid violations whenever feasible. Cautions and teaching points will be given out when necessary but are not required.
- It is not the mission of game officials to flag every small, nuanced infraction of traditional football rules or other insignificant issues that do not produce a significant unfair advantage.

3. YOUR REQUIRED PERSONAL CONDUCT

- Players, coaches, spectators, and officials must avoid profanity.
- Disrespectful language; racist, sexist, homophobic remarks; obscene or threatening gestures/behavior; and bullying are prohibited by anyone attending our events including coaches, players, and spectators.
- Foul play will not be tolerated.
- Any staff member who hears or sees anything that, in his judgment, is an infraction of the required personal conduct standards, may require the person responsible to leave the event.
- If a player or non-player fails to comply with our requests, we have the authority to forfeit the game and have that individual(s) removed from the rented complex.
- Fighting will lead to an immediate ejection, possible suspension, or even a lifetime exclusion. Alcohol, intoxicants, tobacco products, vaping, weapons, and drones are prohibited at our events.
- Our staff, game officials, players, and non-players must comply with rented facility rules.

4. YOUR REQUIRED TEAM CONDUCT

- For the safety of our officials and their ability to administer the game all team personnel and **spectators must remain at least three yards off the sidelines.**
- Our staff will determine where spectators can and cannot observe from and will err on the side of safety for our players and game officials.

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- Officials may require boom boxes or other noise-producing devices to be turned off or eliminated as they may interfere with the official's ability to communicate and administer the game.
- After the game, teams are required to clean up and remove any garbage they brought with them.

5. ROSTERS

- Only players on an officially approved Gridiron roster may participate.
- Teams may play with four (4) to avoid a forfeit.
- The opposing team is not required to "adjust down" when a team cannot field the required number of players but may do so to show sportsmanship.
- If a team "borrows" a player(s) from another team to give them the required number of players, the game will be recorded as a forfeit and the game may be played.

6. COACHES CONDUCT / BENCH FOULS

- We ask that coaches maintain the spirit and the intent of our rules.
- Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their sidelines including players, spectators, guests, and their team staff.
- For the following divisions you may have one coach on the field and they must be ten yards deeper than their deepest player.
 - 6u, 8u, & 10u Girls
- 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 official, becoming entangled in the play or distracting from their opponents' cadence). If they do, the team may incur a bench foul.
- Coaches are prohibited from "chasing the play down field" in the way a game official does.
 - Coaches are encouraged to move away from the play, not towards it.
- 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.
- Coaches are responsible for knowing down and distance. Officials will endeavor to remind them.

7. OUR BASIC FIELD LAYOUT

- Each team will pass through two "No-Run-Zones" as indicated by the directional arrows.
- Possessions will begin at the 5-yard line and will be marked with a bean bag.
- The ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line for a touchback or a safety unless moved by penalty.
- The only first down line-to-gain on the field is at mid-field and marked with a colored cone.
- A hash line will mark where "No-Run-Zones" begin.
- The 2-point conversion is 12 yards from the end zone.
- The end zones are 8 yds deep.
- Our dimensions are approximately 66 yds x 28 yds and are subject to change by location due to available space.

RULE 2: UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

1. SAFETY

- Players may not wear unyielding or stiff material items that in the judgment of the officials may present a hazard to other players. Casts and braces must be padded with a closed-cell, slow recovery foam padding no less than ½-inch thick. This type is the material doctors will use.
- Players must properly wear a protective mouthpiece **in their mouths** 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.
 - Officials reserve the right to remove a player from the game temporarily to have these equipment issues fixed.
- Players must wear pants or shorts that do not have pockets, belt loops, zippers, or exposed drawstrings. Shorts with no pockets can be purchased at www.gridironfb.com. Shorts with pockets must be taped before the game.
- Players must wear closed-toed shoes. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed.
- Players may wear eye protection including prescription glasses or flexible sunglasses.
- Players may wear a face shield molded to the face with no protrusions to protect against facial injury.
- Jewelry that might endanger players must be removed before play or taped to the body.
- At the recreational levels players may wear stocking-style caps, baseball caps, or soft-shelled helmets.

2. FLAG BELTS

- Players must wear flag belts approved by Gridiron.
- Flag belts must be worn as designed, and be free of obstructions or alterations.
- Flags must be pointed outward.
- Altered or tampered flags could result in penalty, ejection, or forfeiture.
- If a player chooses to wear a hand towel, or any other object, on his waist, it will be treated as part of the flag belt.
 - Meaning if you are wearing a towel, armband, gloves, or any other object on your waist and it gets pulled you will be counted as down.
- Flags cannot be the same color as a player's pants/shorts, or the short stripe. Similar color is up to the Official's discretion.

3. MISCELLANEOUS UNIFORM / GEAR INFORMATION

- Players may wear a headband made of non-abrasive material. Rubber or elastic bands may be used in hair.
- Players may tape forearms, hands, and fingers.
- Elbow pads, etc., may be permitted at the game official's discretion.

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- All footballs are subject to inspection by the official before the game and can be required to be inflated at the official's discretion.
- Teams must provide their own game ball, the ball must meet these specifications and are subject to the game official's inspection and discretion. Footballs must meet these size requirements:
 - Pee-Wee Sized Ball: 6u, 8u, 10u
 - Junior Sized Ball: 10u, 12u
 - Youth Sized Ball: 15u
 - High-School Sized Ball: 17u

RULE 3: CLOCK MECHANICS

1. GENERAL TIMING PROCEDURES (be aware there are exceptions for 6U)

- Games are 40 minutes long (two 20-minute halves).
- We intend to complete a game within 1 hour.
- Officials may stop the clock as needed.
- Halftime is about 5 minutes.
- Each team will have two (2) timeouts per game.
- Team timeouts are 30 seconds. After 30 seconds the official will audibly place the offense on a 25-second play clock via the ready-to-play whistle.
- Team coaches are encouraged to yell “clock?” or “clock check?” in lieu of “time?” to avoid confusion when requesting a team timeout.
- A stop clock or “pro clock” will be in effect in the final 2 minutes of **each** half if the score is within 8 points.
- Officials will give a verbal 2-minute warning as close as possible to the actual 2-minute mark, but will not interrupt live play.
- The time remaining on the clock should be announced after every play inside the final 2 minutes of each half.
- The clock will not run during point-after-touchdown attempts (PATs) in the final 2 minutes of either half.
- The clock will resume again after a PAT:
 - At the 1st snap of the new offense's drive (If the score is within 8)
 - When the bags are set and the Ready for Play whistle is blown (If the score is not within 8)
- Our staff may enter the field during any dead ball situation to address matters they believe should not wait until half-time or the end of the game by calling a “Staff Time-Out”.

2. CLOCK OPERATIONS

- The Offense has a 25-second play clock to snap the ball before a delay of game penalty is assessed.
 - The officials will provide leniency in the 6u & 7u girls divisions.
- No period or half can end if there is an obvious timing error or any other irregularity has occurred.
- When officials go to “stop clock” or “pro clock” mechanic, the clock will stop/start as listed below:
 - Turnover/on the snap
 - Inadvertent whistle/at the ready
 - Incomplete passes/on the snap
 - Intentional grounding/at the ready
 - Out-of-bounds plays with a player in possession of the ball/on the snap
 - Fumbled /on the snap
 - Purposely fumbled or muffed/at the ready
 - Penalty administration (other than Delay of Game)/depends on previous play
 - Delay of game/on the snap
 - Referee timeout/at the referee’s discretion
 - Team timeout/on the snap
 - Injury/when a player removed from the field (depending on the status of the clock on previous play)
 - Touchdown or Safety on the next snap after the PAT attempt. PATs are untimed downs during stop/pro clock mechanics.

RULE 4: COIN TOSS

- Coaches or team captains are required to bring their game balls to the coin toss for inspection.
 - Size & inflation will be checked
- Officials will conduct a pre-game safety check to ensure players and equipment are safe and ready for competition.
- Game officials will confirm with team coaches during the coin toss that the teams are prepared to play in a sportsmanlike manner and are properly and legally equipped. Safety is everyone’s responsibility.
- Game officials will issue a warning about unsportsmanlike conduct, excessive rough play, etc., during the coin toss.
- First possession is decided using a coin toss or a number behind the official’s back. The away team will make the call.
- The head official will ask the “calling captain” his choice of “heads” or “tails” or “one” or “two”. The official will ask the opposing team to repeat and confirm the choice before flipping the coin. The head official will then confirm the call.

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- The team winning the toss shall choose one of the following options (Game officials: Always confirm with a coach):
 - Begin on offense
 - Begin on defense
 - Designate which goal their team will defend
- The loser of the coin toss shall choose the remaining options.
- The team that started the game on offense, will start the second half on defense.
- Teams will play in the opposite direction in the first half and the second half.

RULE 5: SCORING

1. SCORING CHART

Touchdown	6 pts with the chance to go for a 1 or 2 after a touchdown attempt (PAT)
Point After Touchdowns (PAT)	1 pt from the 5-yard line, pass play only 2 pts from the 12-yard line, run or pass
Safeties	2 pts are awarded to the defense & possession of the ball at the 5-yard line (going out)
Forfeits	Recorded as 28-0

2. POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN (PAT)

- Following a touchdown, once the scoring team's coach has informed an official of which point conversion choice they want to attempt and the ball is either spotted or the ready-to-play whistle is blown, the decision cannot be changed unless the scoring team uses a team timeout.
- Point conversion choices cannot be changed after a penalty.
- Personal and unsportsmanlike fouls by the defense on a successful PAT are enforced on the next possession, or next spot in overtime periods.
- Fouls committed by the offense on an unsuccessful PAT will be declined by rule (exception: personal and unsportsmanlike fouls).
- 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.
 - False Start & Delay of Game will result in penalty yardage assessed and the attempt retried.
- Fouls by the defense during an unsuccessful PAT attempt will result in a retry after the options are administered. The offense may opt to accept or decline penalty yardage before the retry.

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- Interceptions on PATs may be returned by the defense for 2-points.

Fouls During PAT Attempts

	Successful Attempt	Unsuccessful Attempt	Unsportsmanlike and Personal Fouls
Foul by the Offense	Attempt no good, no retry	Attempt no good, no retry	Carries over to next possession
Foul by the Defense	Declined Attempt is good	Yardage assessed Retry attempt	Carries over to next possession

3. SAFETIES

(Team A is the team that initiated the snap. Team B is the team that began the play on defense)

- 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 but are not limited to:
 - Team A caused the ball to become dead in their own end zone (fumbles, muffed snap, backward pass that hits the ground).
 - Team A player in possession of the ball has his flag pulled in his own end zone.
 - Team A's ball carrier goes out-of-bounds behind his own goal line.
 - Team A commits a foul inside their own end zone.
- Team B exceptions:
 - A flag pull immediately after an interception by Team B in the end zone is a touchback, not a safety.
 - 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.
 - If the ball is intercepted by Team B in the end zone and Team B fouls in the end zone before the ball is 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 result in a safety.
 - If the ball is intercepted by Team B between the 5-yard line and the goal line and the player's momentum takes him into the end zone where the ball becomes dead in Team B's possession.
 - Team B fouls in the end zone (example: flag guarding), the ball belongs to Team B and the penalty will be assessed from the touchback spot. It is a touchback. It is not a safety.

4. MERCY RULE

- The mercy rule may be invoked by the losing team after the losing team has a scoreless possession and the score differential is 28 or more points. The losing team has 3 options: end the game entirely, enter scrimmage mode, or continue playing like normal.
- If at any point the score differential is 28 or more points, the trailing coach may elect to enter scrimmage mode, at which point the final score will be recorded as is, and then the trailing team will have 3 consecutive and continuous drives of 4 downs each (minimum of 12 total plays). Any Defensive penalty or the First Down Line, if achieved, results in a first down for the Offense and a continuation of that set of downs. Offensive penalties which carry a loss of down, still result in a loss of down. Scrimmage mode ends either once the Offense (trailing team) scores or consumes all 3 sets of downs, whichever is first. Interceptions are dead balls and the ball will be given back to the original offense. Coaches should use scrimmage mode to provide playing time for players who may be running low on playing time, to bring in backup quarterbacks, and to try new and unrehearsed plays.
- Officials reserve the right to end the game if teams or coaches are not acting in a sportsmanship-like manner (for example, 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

- **Only the head coach may ask game officials about rule clarification and interpretations.**
- Generally, officials are happy to answer quick questions during the game if they do not impede the game. The priority is to spot the ball and then address questions without impeding the play clock.
- If a head coach believes an official has made a procedural error, he may call for a timeout. If the head official agrees that there has been a procedural error (example: wrong down, incorrect penalty yardage, improper rule interpretation, score recorded incorrectly, etc.), the procedural error will be addressed and the timeout may not be charged at the official's discretion.
- The challenge must be made to an official before the next snap.
- The official will stop the game and review the procedure with his partner. If they are unsure, a coach or the official may go get the Field Manager for clarification.
- In the event a head coach loses a procedural challenge and the team does not possess a legal team timeout, a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed to the head coach. If a coach receives two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, he will be disqualified and must leave the event.
- **Only procedural issues may be addressed; not an official's judgment call or no call.**
- **Videos and/or photographs will never be viewed by officials during a game and cannot be used to influence and/or review officials' calls/no calls. The only time video/photo evidence may be used is in email submission to the league after game day to review potentially dangerous plays or unacceptable behavior.**

RULE 7: OFFENSE

1. GENERAL OFFENSE

- After all players have “set” one player may be “in motion”, at the time of the snap.
- Players may not be in motion toward the LOS at the time of the snap
- Snaps must be made between the center’s legs.
- Teams will have four (4) downs to gain a first down at mid-field in the 6u, 7u G, 8u, 10u, 10u G, 12u, & 13u G divisions.
 - 15u & 17u have three (3) downs to gain a first down at mid-field then are forced to auto-punt on 4th down no matter where the ball is.
- Once across mid-field and awarded a new set of downs, teams will have four (4) downs to score unless awarded an automatic first down by penalty.
 - 15u & 17u have three (3) downs to score a touchdown then are forced to auto-punt on 4th down no matter where the ball is.
- 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.
- If they choose to “punt” a game official will move the ball to the opponent’s 5-yard line, change of possession.
- Any quick or abrupt movement by a single player or multiple offensive players in unison, which simulates the snap, is a false start. This includes but is not limited to, a quarterback thrusting his hands forward when there is not a simultaneous snap. This is a judgment call.
- 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.
- “Center Sneaks” are not allowed. The ball must completely leave the center’s hands. The center must take at least two steps backward to receive a handoff.
- 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 unless rushed or pursued by the defense.
- Ball carriers may use backward passes and legal pitches behind the line of scrimmage.
- No backward passes or laterals beyond the LOS
- The ball will be declared dead if any portion of the ball carrier’s body other than his hands or feet (knee, elbow, buttocks, or ball-in-hand, etc.) touches the ground.
- The offense is always responsible for quickly retrieving the ball and returning it to an official or to the line of scrimmage at the end of each play.
- There is no hand checking in flag football. Hand-checking is an act that, in the judgment of the referee, allows a defender to gain an advantage over a receiver by slapping, holding, pushing, or otherwise impeding the hands, arms, or body at the line of scrimmage on the snap or, in certain circumstances, elsewhere on the field.
 - This will be assessed as Illegal Contact.

2. BLOCKING / ILLEGAL SCREENING

- Blocking is obstructing or physically contacting an opponent with any part of the body.
- Illegal Screening is when an offensive player materially impedes the defender from getting to the player with the ball by abruptly stepping in the defender's path or taking a position (two or less normal strides away) in a defender's line of travel that forces the defender to abruptly veer around his opponent. This is a judgment call.
 - Blocking & Screening will both be assessed as blocking
- Physical-contact blocking (as seen in traditional football) and non-contact blocking "screen blocking" (as seen in basketball) is not allowed even if unintentional. This is a difficult transition for traditional football players.
- All offensive players who do not have the ball must stop within a timely manner after the ball has crossed the LOS and is in the possession of another offensive player. This is a judgment call made by the officials.
- The Ball carrier may cut or juke around their teammates IF the player without the ball is not moving.
- A penalty may be called even when an offensive player accidentally obstructs a defender.
- Offensive players must be aware that they may be penalized for screening by simply chasing the play and providing an inadvertent block or screen.
- 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 do so.
- "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 downfield after the snap may not initiate contact with an opponent.**
 - This will be assessed as illegal contact on the offense.

3. FUMBLES / MUFFS

- The ball becomes dead when it hits the ground.
- If a passed, pitched, or muffed (uncontrolled touch), is intercepted before becoming dead it remains a "live ball".
- If a ball is fumbled **forward** the play will be blown dead immediately when the ball carrier loses control and the ball will be spotted at the front foot of the ball carrier at the time the ball was released.
 - This is to stop players from diving for/wrestling for a fumble.
- Backward fumbles are marked where they hit the ground. Backward passes that hit the ground are considered fumbles, **for the sake of this rule.**
- Muffed snaps will be marked where the ball **first** hits the ground.

4. RUNNING/JUMPING/DIVING/NO RUN ZONES

- The player initially taking the snap may not run the ball past the line-of-scrimmage unless he is rushed.
- A jump or dive made by the ball carrier to advance the ball will be assessed as flag guarding.

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- Not every insignificant jump or small hop constitutes a safety issue. This is a judgment call.
- 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.
- No player may hurdle over another player (unless they are doing so to avoid contact with a defender laying on the ground).
- 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.
- 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.
- 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's flag, the defender will be called for tripping. The defender is obliged to make a fair, SAFE, and reasonable attempt. Safety is paramount.
- Ball carriers must make every effort to avoid a defender who has an established position.
 - Failing to do so will result in a charging penalty.
- Runners may leave their feet to avoid a collision or falling on another player.
- Passers may jump vertically to throw the ball over a taller defender.
- "No Run Zones" exist in 8u divisions and up. No-run zones are enforced as a safety measure to discourage power runs, diving, etc., near the goal line and First Down Line. When the ball is spotted inside a "No Run Zone" the offense must execute a forward pass that breaks the line-of-scrimmage. The ball may still be handed off or pitched behind the line of scrimmage prior to the forward pass, but the ball cannot be advanced past the line of scrimmage via the ground.
 - If the offense commits a penalty inside the no run zone and the penalty yardage brings them behind the no run zone, the no run zone will be extended from where the new LOS is until the line to gain.
 - If the offense starts a play inside the no run zone and a sack brings them behind the no run zone, the no run zone will be extended from where the new LOS is until the line to gain.
 - **6u DOES NOT HAVE A NO-RUN ZONE.**

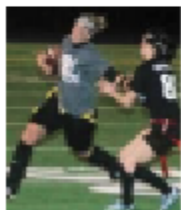
5. FLAG GUARDING/STIFF-ARMING

- The ball carrier's flags must be accessible to the defense throughout the play.
- Flag guarding is the act of a ball carrier denying a defender the opportunity to capture his flag in any physical way.
- Flags may not be tucked in pants, tucked under jerseys, worn improperly, looped around the waist belt, or knotted.
- 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.
- The ball carrier may not swat a defender's hands away nor pin the flag against his body using the ball or hands.

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- An official may call flag guarding if he feels 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.
- 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.
- Flag guarding shall not be called if there is no contact made with the defender.
- The ball carrier may bend at the knees to dip low, side cut, skip, or take short hops.
- Tampering with the flag in any way to gain an advantage is illegal and will be dealt with under the Unfair Acts Rule.

Examples of flag guarding: stiff arming, pinning the flag, swatting, using the ball as a stiff arm, etc



6. PASS PLAYS

- For 12u and under an audible 7-second "clock" is administered by an official. The required cadence is a consistent 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, whistle! **The whistle is instead of saying the number 7 aloud.**
 - The Passer has 7 seconds to:
 - Pass the ball
 - Cross the LOS by running the ball (If being rushed)
 - Hand the ball off
 - Pitch or laterally pass the ball behind the LOS
- For 15u & 17u an audible 5-second "clock" is administered by an official. The required cadence is a consistent 1, 2, 3, 4, whistle! **The whistle is instead of saying the number 5 aloud.**
 - The Passer has 5 seconds to:
 - Pass the ball
 - Cross the LOS by running the ball (If being rushed)
 - Hand the ball off
 - Pitch or laterally pass the ball behind the LOS
- When a 7-second violation occurs, or a 5-second violation for 15u & 17u, it is treated as an incomplete pass and the ball is returned to scrimmage.

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- Only one forward pass per play.
- Once the ball has passed the line of scrimmage, it cannot be returned to behind the line of scrimmage and thrown forward legally.
- To be a legal pass, both feet of the passer must be on or behind the Line of Scrimmage when the ball is released.
- A passer may jump vertically to throw the ball over a defender.
- All offensive players are eligible to receive a pass unless they have stepped out-of-bounds of their own accord.
- Offensive players may not “re-establish” themselves in the field of play to catch the ball.
- When an offensive player catches the ball after stepping out-of-bounds, it will result in a foul for illegal touching.
- Any offensive player who receives either a forward or backward handoff behind scrimmage can pass the ball from behind the line-of-scrimmage.
- If the passer’s flag has been pulled while the passer still has the ball in his 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.
- An underhand forward pass (shovel pass) is legal and if it is dropped, it is ruled an incomplete pass, not a fumble. The pass must go beyond the LOS to be a legal forward pass.
- A backward pass that is dropped or incomplete is ruled a fumble. The ball will be spotted where it hits the ground.
- An illegal forward pass penalty shall be called in the following two circumstances:
 - A pass that is thrown while any part of the quarterback’s body is in contact with the ground past the line of scrimmage or “bean bag”.
 - A pass is thrown forward and received behind the line of scrimmage.
- Any player, including the passer, may catch and advance a loose ball that has not been grounded.

7. BATTING

- Any ball in flight may be batted in any direction by an eligible receiver or defender.

8. INTENTIONAL GROUNDING

- A passer may not throw the ball into an area behind the line-of-scrimmage where there is no offensive player to avoid a loss of yardage.
- A passer may legally “throw the ball away” as long as the ball goes beyond the line of scrimmage.
- It is legal for the passer 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.
- The spike must be fluid and immediate after the snap or it is intentional grounding.
- Passers may intentionally throw the ball out-of-bounds to stop the clock if it goes past the line of scrimmage.

9. CATCHES

- A pass is completed when the receiver simultaneously places at least one foot inbounds and maintains possession. If the first foot to land on the ground is out of bounds, it is an incomplete pass.
- 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.
- Simultaneous catches between a defensive and offensive player become dead automatically and go to the offense.
- 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.
- 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.).

RULE 8: DEFENSE

1. GENERAL DEFENSE

- Stripping or attempting to strip the ball from a player's hand, including the quarterback, is illegal.
- Defensive teams may not attempt to confuse the offensive team by simulating their pre-snap signals or cadence.

2. RUSHING THE PASSER

- Before each play is allowed to begin an official will mark off a 7-yard rush line.
- Defensive players that "rush the passer" must begin the play at this 7-yard mark or further away from the line-of-scrimmage.
- Players not rushing the passer may defend the line-of-scrimmage but not enter the backfield unless the ball is completely released by the passer. Simply touching the ball to another player does not permit the passer to run, or the defense to cross the line of scrimmage.
- A defensive player who crosses the rush line before the snap and self-corrects and returns to his side of the rush line before he rushes is not penalized.
- The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to

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the quarterback, IF the rusher is 1 or more yards to either side of the beanbag, prior to the snap **AND rushes directly after the snap**. The PATH is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the QB. The PATH does not move once the quarterback moves. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. **If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.**

- Impeding the rusher is in effect until the ball crosses the Line of Scrimmage.

• 6u does not allow rushing the passer.

3. ROUGHING THE PASSER

- Defensive players must make a concerted effort to avoid charging into the passer.
- During the passer’s drop and throughout his entire throwing motion, the passer cannot be touched above the upper waist in any material way.
- 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.
- To assist defensive players to avoid unnecessary contact with the passer the covering official will endeavor, but is not required, to announce “ball’s away” or some other helpful phrase when the ball has left the passer’s hand.
- Defensive players may not “crash” the passer’s throwing arm, shoulder, or body even if the ball is touched first.
- An insignificant “brush-by” may be allowed by the game official but is not guaranteed. This is a judgment call.
- Making contact with the passer while blocking or attempting to block a pass may result in a roughing of the passer penalty.
- 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.).
- A roughing penalty will not be enforced if a passer initiates contact with an opponent while in the throwing motion; for example, during the passer’s follow through the passer’s arm makes contact with an opponent’s hand, arm, or shoulder. In this instance, the impetus of the contract is the action of the passer and not the defender. This is a judgment call.
- If roughness is habitual for a single player, disqualification or ejection procedures may apply.
- If roughness is habitual for a team, forfeiture procedures may apply.
- **The Roughing the Passer penalty yardage may be added on to the end of the play, if the pass is completed. Otherwise it will be assessed from the Line of Scrimmage.**

4. FLAG PULLING MECHANICS

- Flag pulling is the legal removal of a flag from an opponent who has possession of the ball.
- Legal flag pulls must begin with the hands leading toward the opponent’s hips and flags.

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- No player has the right to over aggressively “body up”, “wrap up”, “play through”, “bull rush”, charge, spear, or lead with a shoulder, tackle, or attempt to tackle an opponent even to capture a flag.
- 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.
- Pushing, striking, holding, slapping, or tripping while attempting to pull a flag is not permitted.
- Defenders may dive to attempt to pull the ball carrier’s flag but this must be done in a safe manner in the judgment of the covering official.
- A defensive player may not pull the flag of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- Any defensive player who removes the flag from an offensive ball carrier is encouraged to show good sportsmanship and hold the flag above his head to assist the officials in locating the spot where the capture occurred.
- Players may be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct for throwing, spiking, obscuring, or delaying the ball carrier in recovering his pulled flag.
- If a ball carrier’s flag inadvertently comes apart or falls off during the play, the ball carrier will be ruled down where the flag belt is detached.
- If a receiver has an incomplete or missing flag belt when he catches the ball the play will be called dead where the receiver caught the ball.
- 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

- This is a “free release” league.
- Defenders cannot “chuck”, “jam”, “bump”, “press”, etc., a receiver.
- Receivers may not intentionally make contact with defenders as they progress down the field.
 - This will be assessed as Illegal Contact.
- A player may “find” their opponent by reaching out and placing a hand on him as long as touching does not delay or impede him. This is not considered pass interference.
- Pass interference normally occurs above the waist; entangled feet are not considered pass interference.
- Incidental contact is not considered pass interference.
- Contact away from the direction of the pass is not considered pass interference but may be a separate foul.
- Pass interference indicators are:
 - Shoving or pushing off to create separation.
 - Making noteworthy contact before the ball arrives.
 - Playing through the back of an opponent.
 - Hook and turn: grabbing the torso and turning an opponent before the pass arrives.
 - Early material contact by a defender who is not playing or looking for the ball.
 - Arm bars, restricting, or grabbing.
 - Cutting off the path of a receiver by being in front of him and slowing down or being beside him and “riding” them off his path to the ball.

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- For pass interference the ball will be placed at the spot of the foul and an automatic first down will be awarded to the offense.
- For a pass interference in the endzone the ball will be spotted at the 1-yard line.
- Whether a pass is catchable or uncatchable has no bearing on pass interference.
 - All passes are considered catchable.
- A player may use his arms or hands to obstruct the receiver's view of the ball (face guarding) without turning his own head to play the ball as long as contact is not made with the receiver.

6. INTERCEPTIONS

- Intercepted passes remain live and may be returned for points.
- Intercepted passes during Point After Touchdown (PAT) attempts may be returned for 2 points.
- In the event of an interception, the intercepting team must secure the ball with "clean hands" to be legal i.e., they must not have committed a foul before or simultaneous to the interception.
- If the intercepting team gains 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.).

RULE 9: OVERTIME FORMAT

1. GENERAL OVERTIME RULES

- Overtime is intended to mirror, in most aspects, the college overtime, with emphasis on both teams getting an opportunity to possess the ball and both teams being required to stop the other team from scoring before being declared the winner.
- A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first. The away team calls the toss.
- There are no timeouts in overtime.
- There is still a 25-second play clock, but no game clock.
- During the first overtime, the team starting on offense will have 4 downs from the 2 pt conversion line to score. After a score, they can elect to go for a 1 or 2 pt conversion. The team going second in OT then has the same opportunity to equal or exceed the starting team's score.
- In each overtime period, the offense will have a choice of going for a 1 or 2 pt attempt.
- Teams will alternate starts in the event that additional OT periods are needed. Interceptions during OT can be returned for points.

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- During the regular season there will be 3 OT periods; if there is no winner after 3 the game will end in a tie. During playoffs, there will be OT until a winner is declared.
- **6u does not have OT during the regular season.**

RULE 10: PLAYOFF FORMAT

1. GENERAL PLAYOFF RULES

- Playoffs will follow all of the above rules with the exceptions as set forth here.
- There will be two 15-minute halves. The clock will not stop in these halves, except for timeouts (no “pro clock”).
- Each team will have 2 timeouts per half (as opposed to 2 per game during the regular season).
- There will be a very strict play clock (6u will still be lenient).
- If the game reaches a 28-point score margin and it is not the losing team’s first game, the game will be over. There is no option for scrimmage mode.

2. SEMI-FINAL AND CHAMPIONSHIP RULES

- Semi-final and championship games will be played similarly to early playoff games with the exceptions as set forth here.
- There will be two 20-minute halves. The clock will stop in these halves, using “pro clock” mechanics in the last 2 minutes of each half, if the score differential is 8 points or less (like during the regular season). Each team still has 2 timeouts per half.

RULE 11: OFFICIATING

1. MOMENTUM RULE

- If the ball is intercepted between the 5-yard line and the goal line and the player’s momentum takes him into the end zone where the ball becomes dead in his possession or the intercepting team fouls in the end zone (example: flag guarding), the ball belongs to the intercepting team and the play will result in a touchback. It is not a safety.

2. MARKING / SPOTTING THE BALL

- When the ball becomes dead it will be re-spotted near the center of the field. A hash mark system will not be used.

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- The ball will be spotted wherever the **PLAYER'S FRONT FOOT WAS (NOT THE BALL!)** at the time of the flag pull or wherever the ball carrier left the field of play.
- A ball beanbag or line judge shall be used to mark the line of scrimmage. The marker will be placed in the middle of the field adjacent to the ball. Teams may not move the ball to a "hash".
- If a ball carrier's flag inadvertently comes apart or falls off during the play, the ball carrier will be ruled down where the flag belt is detached.
- If the ball is intercepted in the end zone and the intercepting team fouls in the end zone before the ball is brought back into the field (example: flag guarding), the result of the play will be a touchback and the foul will be administered from the touchback spot. This will not result in safety.

3. FORFEITS AND ENDING THE GAME

- **Neither half** may end with a defensive penalty unless it is declined. All offensive penalties that occur with time expired in either half will end the game or half.
- Offsetting penalties will not extend the half or game.
- Forfeits that occur before the contest are recorded as 28-0. Forfeits that occur once the contest is underway will be recorded as that score or the actual score when the forfeit occurred, whichever is greater.
- If a team plays in a habitual rough manner the game may be forfeited.
- No period or half can end if there is an obvious timing error or any other irregularity has occurred.

4. COOL DOWN PERIOD

- All unsportsmanlike conduct and egregious personal fouls may be accompanied by a cool-down period at a minimum.
- Before, or instead of, disqualification or ejection an official may, but is not required to, order a player a "cool down" period if the official chooses.
- Players should think of this "cool down" as a warning before being disqualified or ejected and be thankful for it.
- This period will consist of 1-play tracked by the official who ordered it.
 - If the offending team only has 5 players they will play 1 down with 4 players.

5. DISQUALIFICATIONS AND EJECTIONS

- Disqualifications, Ejections, and Unsportsmanlike Conduct/Unnecessary Roughness are the only four penalties that cannot be declined. They are completely the option of the game officials.
- The yardage portion of the penalty may be declined but the infraction itself cannot.

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- The difference between disqualification and ejection is completely the determination of the presiding referee and may not be appealed.
- Disqualifications are normally reserved to address lower-level transgressions.
- A disqualification will last for the remainder of the game the player was disqualified for.
- A disqualified player may play in the next scheduled game.
- An ejected player may not play in the next scheduled game. They must sit out at least one additional game or any additional amount of games as determined by the official including but not limited to the rest of the season.
- **Any official may disqualify a player, parent, coach, or spectator.**
- To eject a player all officials must agree and it must be reported to the field marshal before play resumes.
- Ejections and disqualifications may occur for but are not limited to:
 - A second unsportsmanlike or personal foul on a single player or coach
 - Any act deemed egregious by the head official
 - Disrespectfully addressing or intentionally touching a game official
 - Four unsportsmanlike and/or egregious personal fouls by one team (forfeiture)
 - Fighting

6. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

- Disrespect toward an official, coach, spectator, or another player will constitute unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Players shall not “showboat”, taunt, spike the ball, or flag belt toward an opponent, or be excessive in any way, including using force against or verbally attacking or harassing another player.
- Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If it continues, the player or players will be disqualified/ejected from the game.
- Coaches and fans may also be subject to this rule. Coaches are encouraged to Coach with enthusiasm and not for personal achievement. Fans should cheer on players maturely and healthily.
- Players who physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach, or official will be subject to disqualification/ejection/suspension.
- **PARENTS may not address other parents, teams, refs, or opposing players in a negative, taunting, or confrontational way.**
- **Coaches may not address other parents, teams, refs, or opposing players/coaches in a negative, taunting, or confrontational way.**
- Celebrations are permissible but must be short, conservative, and not directed at an opponent.
 - Any bench clearing after a score will result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.
- No one may mimic the officials or officials’ calls, including but not limited to counting down the play clock or game clock.
- Use of inflammatory words or gestures is prohibited.

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- If unsportsmanlike conduct occurs during a live play and the team did not score on that play, the penalty will be assessed from the new line-of-scrimmage, i.e., it will be added to or subtracted from the end of the play.
- Players cannot make contact that is considered unnecessary or provokes roughness.
- Unnecessary Roughness penalties that occur during a play will be assessed from the spot of the foul.
- If roughness is habitual for a single player, disqualification or ejection procedures may apply.
- If roughness is habitual for a team, forfeiture procedures may apply.

7. FIGHTING

- Fighting will lead to immediate ejection, possible suspension, or lifetime exclusion.
- Fighting is any act or attempt by a player or non-player to strike or engage a player or nonplayer in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include but are not limited to, attempting to strike or striking with the arms, hands, legs, feet, or foreign object whether or not there was contact.
- Any player who comes off the sideline to participate in a fight will be disqualified or ejected.
- If either team leaves the bench during a fight the game will be forfeited immediately.

8. BENCH FOULS OR WARNINGS

- Teams may incur bench fouls for a variety of reasons including but not limited to:
 - Players or non-players interfering with play or an official
 - Disrespect toward officials or other players or non-players
 - Non-players on the field of play
 - Coaches on the field or becoming entangled in a live play

9. INADVERTENT WHISTLE

- If an official blows an inadvertent whistle he will declare the ball dead where the ball was at the time of the inadvertent whistle. The team against which the action ended may have the option of accepting the play (i.e., the yards gained and the down advances) or replaying the down from the original line-of-scrimmage.
- If the ball was in the air when the inadvertent whistle occurred, it will be returned to the line of scrimmage and the down will be replayed.
- If a penalty marker is thrown before an inadvertent whistle, an accepted penalty will be administered as in any other play situation. When the foul is accepted, the inadvertent whistle is disregarded.
- When an inadvertent whistle is triggered by an unfair act or an act used to deceive or confuse a game official, the officiating crew may use their collective judgment to fairly adjudicate the situation. It may result in yardage awarded, a score granted, and/or the guilty player disqualified, etc. It is solely up to the officiating crew to decide.

10. UNFAIR ACTS RULE

- Neither team shall commit an act which, in the judgment of the game officials, tends to make a travesty of the game.
- The head official or other staff members may enforce any penalty or remedy any situation with anything he considers equitable -- including awarding of a first down, a replay **of down**, a score, forfeiture, removal of forfeiture, or any administrative issue or situation or not covered specifically in these rules.
- If an ineligible player (example: not on the roster, previously disqualified, or previously ejected) is discovered by any means (example: observation, challenge, etc.) participating in a live ball play, that team will forfeit the game, and the Unfair Act is assessed to the head coach.

11. RULE MODIFICATION

- Modifications of these rules for local sensitivities and practicalities may be accomplished with the coordination and approval of the Owner/Operator and Head Official/Manager of the League.
- **For our league's play, this rulebook takes precedence over all other rulebooks. However, if there are topics not explicitly covered in this rulebook, the current year's NFHS Flag Football rulebook may be used as supplementary guidelines. The NFHS Flag Football rulebook, as well as the NFHS Football rulebook, provide helpful and in-depth insight into football rules including but not limited to equipment rules, penalty administration, etc. The NFHS rulebooks are non-binding to this league, but may be consulted by the Owner/Operator and Head Official/Manager to resolve non-covered issues. Thus, if you have a question, it is recommended you reach out to league administration.**

PENALTIES

Defensive Spot Fouls	
Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic First Down
Holding (The Ball Carrier)	+10 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	+10 yards & Automatic First Down
Tackling	+10 yards & Automatic First Down
Tripping	+10 yards & Automatic First Down

Offensive Spot Fouls	
Blocking / Screening	-10 yards & Loss of Down
Charging	-10 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding / Jumping	-10 yards & Loss of Down

Defensive Penalties Assessed From the Line of Scrimmage	
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	+10 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	+10 yards & Automatic First Down
Offside / Illegal Substitution	+5 yards & Automatic First Down
Illegal Rush	+5 yards & Automatic First Down
Illegal Flag Pull	+5 yards & Automatic First Down
Roughing the Passer	+10 yards & Automatic First Down
Illegal Contact	+5 yards & Automatic First Down
Taunting	+5 yards & Automatic First Down

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Offensive Penalties Assessed From the Line of Scrimmage	
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	-10 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	-10 yards & Loss of Down
Offside / Illegal Substitution	-5 yards & Loss of Down
Illegal Forward Pass	-5 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	-10 yards & Loss of Down
Illegal Motion/ Illegal Shift / Illegal Procedure	-5 yards & Loss of Down
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yards & Loss of Down
False Start	-5 yards & Replay Down
Delay of Game	-5 yards & Replay Down
Illegal Rush (Run)	-5 yards & Loss of Down
Illegal Touching	-5 yards & Loss of Down
Illegal Contact	-5 yards & Loss of Down
Intentional Grounding	-5 yards & Loss of Down
Taunting	-5 yards & Loss of Down