

NATIONAL FLAG FOOTBALL

Version 3.9 – TOURNAMENT RULES

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# OFFICIAL RULE BOOK



# NATIONAL FLAG FOOTBALL

## Version 3.9 – TOURNAMENT RULES

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### FORMAT

- The game is played with five (5) players. However, a minimum of four (4) players must be on the field always.
- A player may only appear on one roster per division.
- If a player is found playing on a team illegally, the coach, illegal player, and/or team may be removed from the event.

### PLAYER ATTIRE

- Players must provide light and dark shirts or jerseys.
- Players are designated as home or away based on the schedule. During bracket play, the highest seed will be the home team.
- The away team will wear the light side of the shirt/jersey and the home team will wear their dark side.
- Players are required to wear protective mouthpieces during game play.
- Shirts/jerseys must be tucked in always. If a shirt/jersey is hanging out, flag guarding may be called.
- Molded and screw-in cleats are permitted. No metal cleats are allowed.
- No jewelry, or hand warmers are permitted during the games. Hats with a brim, may be worn backwards only.
- Officials will dry off a ball upon request. Towels are not permitted on the waist of players.
- Shorts and pants cannot have open pockets. All open pockets must be taped.

### AGE DIVISION AND STRUCTURE

- Our tournaments host both Competitive and Recreational divisions of play.
- Our age cutoff for our events is January 1st of the current year. Meaning birth year will now determine a player's eligible division.
- Our exclusive NFF ONLY division will use current school year grades when determining playing divisions.

## THIS IS A BIRTHYEAR PROGRAM

BIRTH YEAR	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
DIVISION	6U	7U	8U	9U	10U	11U	12U	13U	14U	15U	16U	17U

### EQUIPMENT – FLAGS & BALLS

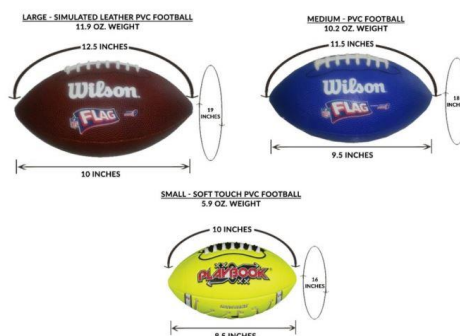
- Teams are required to bring their own flags. If you do not have flags, we have them available for purchase, but they must be pre ordered through our event office. Flags are \$10 each.
- **No Mushroom Poppers or "Shrumz" Flags allowed.**
- Team shorts and flags cannot be the same color. If your flags are blue, you cannot wear blue shorts or pants.
- The official balls listed below are to be used for tournament play. If you have a ball that is the regulation size or larger, then it may be used. Balls may be purchased at the tournament for \$25 each.

**6U and younger:** Franklin Airtech or Mini (9 inch) K2 or equivalent is acceptable.

**7U and 8U:** NFL FLAG Blue Ball or any official "Pee Wee" or larger sized football.

**9U through 14U:** NFL FLAG Brown Football or any official "junior" sized or larger football.

**15U and Above:** NFL FLAG Brown Football or any "Youth" or "Official" sized football permitted.



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### COACHES

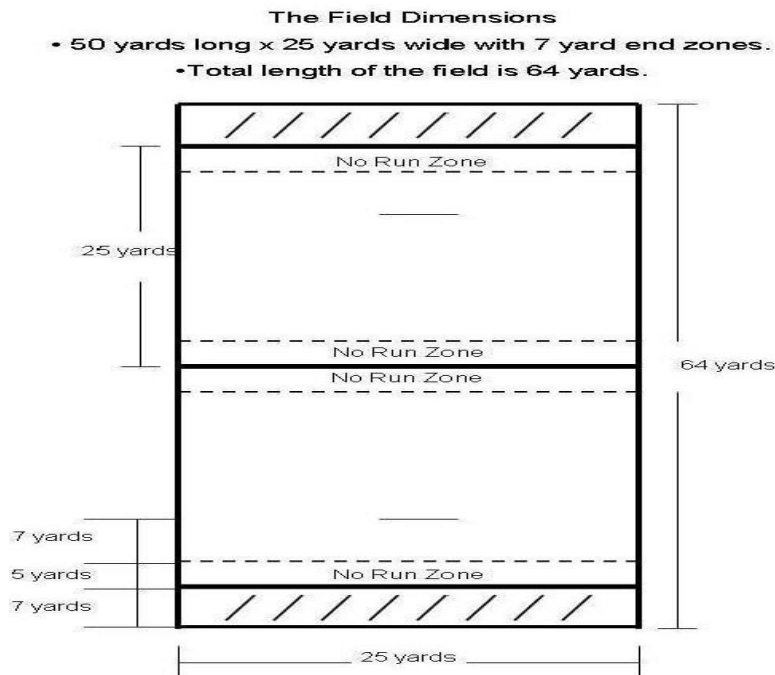
- **Teams may ONLY have 3 coaches.** These coaches must be identified on the team roster to be an official coach.
- All coaches, both offensive and defensive, must move to the **sidelines** prior to the snap of the ball.  
**Exception: Lombardi and 6U division one coach** may remain on the field during a play on **offense only**.
- Coaches are responsible for having a rulebook, knowing their schedule, and cleaning up their sideline.

### POSSESSIONS

- A coin toss determines which team takes first possession of the ball. The designated away team for the game will call the coin toss. The winner of the toss has the option to begin on offense or defense. The team that begins on offense in the first half will begin on defense in the second half. The loser of the coin toss will choose which goal to defend. **No deferring to the second half.**
- Teams switch directions at the beginning of the second half.
- For each possession the offense has **three downs** to obtain a first down at midfield, if midfield is obtained, the offense then has three more downs to reach the end zone. **There are NO fourth downs in Tournament Play.**
- A first down is only obtained one of two ways; the offense reaches midfield within three downs or a defensive penalty occurs with the result being an automatic first down.
- If the offense fails to reach midfield or fails to reach the end zone within three downs, the result is a turnover.

### FIELD SET UP

- The field is roughly 64 yards in total length by 25 yards in total width. Some field modifications may exist.
- Teams must choose opposite sides of the field to watch the game. **Exceptions:** Games that are played on the turf field may require parents to view the games from the end zones.
- Most possession changes will start at the offensive team's 5-yard line. **Exception:** Interceptions.
- A 5-yard (15 feet) buffer zone is in place during all games. This buffer zone surrounds the playing field. This zone assists in maintaining the safety of our players and spectators during game play. Only coaches and players of the current game, as well as league personnel are allowed within this zone during the game. Coaches are asked to assist us with the enforcement of this rule. This may be enforced by a delay of game or too many men on the field penalty.



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### GENERAL OFFENSE

- **NO INTENTIONAL CONTACT** of any kind is permitted.
- Downfield blocking is illegal. Any offensive player who continues **running AND impedes** the progress of a defensive player who is attempting to pull the ball carrier's flag will be called for illegal blocking. However, a player running down field on the opposite side of the field that has nothing to do with the play will not be called.
- All offensive players must start with their mouth pieces in, shirts/jerseys tucked in, flag belts on, and flags properly secured at the hips with **flag sockets facing outwards**.
- The ball must be snapped between the center's legs to start a play. Shotgun snaps are allowed.
- There is a **30-second huddle clock**, which starts once the line of scrimmage is marked and the ball is spotted.
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage. A motion player does NOT need to stop, prior to the snap of the ball.
- No laterals of any kind, anywhere on the field are legal.
- Spinning is permitted.
- Jumping or diving to **ADVANCE** the ball is illegal. However, an offensive player may jump over a defensive player on the ground to avoid a collision. Jumping or diving to catch a pass is permitted.
- The ball will be spotted at the location of where the flag was when it was separated from the belt.

### PASSING GAME

- QB has a seven (7) second "pass clock."
- If the pass is not thrown within seven seconds, the play is ruled dead, with a loss of down. The ball is placed at the original line of scrimmage.
- If the ball is handed off, the seven-second pass rule is no longer in effect.
- Passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, including feet. Failure to comply, results in a loss of down.
- Only one forward pass per down. All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.

### RECEIVING GAME

- All players are eligible to receive passes, including the QB, but only if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage first.
- A receiver must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch.
- A receiver is down where his or her flag belt is pulled. Exception: To achieve a first down, or a touchdown, the ball carrier's flag belt must cross the plane of the first down line and/or goal line.
- If a receiver's flag inadvertently falls off, even without contact from another player, that player is ruled down at the spot the flag fell off.
- If a receiver's flag inadvertently falls off prior to receiving the ball and later in the same play catches the ball without replacing the flag, the receiver will be down immediately at the point of reception.
- If a receiver and defender both catch the ball at the same time and both retain possession to the ground, then the tie would go to the receiver, with receiver being down at the point of the tied reception.
- A receiver cannot willingly run out of bounds and then come back in bounds to catch a ball.

### RUNNING GAME

- Only "direct" handoffs (player to player, hand to hand) behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Anyone behind the line of scrimmage can receive a handoff. A player must completely let go of the ball to be considered a legal handoff.
- **Center sneak is allowed but must be clean exchange. The center must completely release the ball on the exchange to the QB before the QB may hand the ball back to the center.**
- There is no limit to the number of handoffs that can be performed by the offense in a single play, so long as the ball never crosses the line of scrimmage.
- The QB can run the ball only if he/she has first handed the ball off behind the line of scrimmage and then taken a "direct" handoff back from another player before the ball has ever crossed the line of scrimmage.
- The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball, if he or she does not pass the line of scrimmage first.
- It is the responsibility of the ball carrier to avoid colliding with defenders that lie in his/her path. Unintentional contact will not be penalized, provided the ball carrier tries to avoid it. Failure to attempt to avoid contact with a defender (charging) may be penalized. Intentional contact will not be tolerated, and may also result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, and/or player ejection.

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### GENERAL DEFENSE

- **NO INTENTIONAL CONTACT** of any kind is permitted.
- Defensive players cannot pass the line of scrimmage, until the ball is handed off.
- Defenders must only attempt to grab an offensive players flags when trying to get them down.
- If a defender attempts to pull an offensive player's flags and inadvertently grabs their jersey, the defender must immediately and completely release the jersey before they can reattempt to pull the flag. Failure to do so will result in a holding penalty.
- All defensive players must give the offense a one-yard cushion prior to the snap of the ball.

### FLAG PULLING/GUARDING

- **Flag Guarding** is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, or shoulder or covering the flags with the football jersey.
- **A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier touches the ball.**
- Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- The flag belts (not the flags themselves) must be secured to ensure they do not hang appearing to be a flag. If the belt is hanging, flag guarding may be called.
- Shirts/jerseys must be tucked in always. If a shirt/jersey is hanging out, flag guarding may be called.

### INTERCEPTIONS

- Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.
- You cannot return an interception during overtime. The play will just result in a loss of possession.

### NO RUN ZONES

- **"No Run Zones" are only enforced in 9U+ Divisions.**
- **"No Run Zones"-do not apply in 6u, 7u, 8u divisions.**
- "No Run Zones" are designed to avoid short-yardage situations.
- "No Run Zones" come into effect only when the offensive team is approaching a first down or the end zone. Exception: If the offensive team has already achieved a first down but has been pushed back into a "No Run Zone", then the "No Run Zone" is no longer in effect.
- Whenever within the "No Run Zone" the offense must pass.
- **A handoff is allowed in a "No Run Zone" but must be passed.**
- If a run play occurs while inside the "No Run Zone", the play is immediately dead with the consumption of a down.

### RUSHING OF THE QUARTERBACK

- **You may only rush the quarterback in the 9U+ Divisions.**
- **You may not rush the QB in the 6U, 7U and 8U divisions unless a direct handoff has occurred.**
- The rush marker will be designated by the referee seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Any number of players may rush the quarterback if they are beyond the rush marker at the time the ball is snapped.
- If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) **CANNOT** rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the hand off or passed ball.
- The rusher must take an angled path to the QB. If this path is crossed AND contact is made involving the rusher and any offensive player, then an offensive impeding penalty will be assessed.
- Once the rusher angle is set, he/she cannot change their path to the QB. If the path is changed, they will lose right of way privileges. This means that if any contact is made, it will be called against the initiating player.
- The rusher **CANNOT** run straight into the center. The center has the right of way so long as the center remains in his/her original spot at the time the ball was snapped.
- If contact is made with the center by the rusher who has not taken an angle to the quarterback, a defensive impeding penalty will be assessed.
- Players not rushing the quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.
- The rusher may attempt to block the pass, but it is a penalty to contact the quarterback's arm.

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### INADVERTENT WHISTLE

- If there is an inadvertent whistle during a play, the offense has the choice of either the result of the play at the **point** the whistle was blown or replaying the down.
- If there is an inadvertent whistle during a passing play and the ball is in flight, the down is replayed.
- The half or game cannot end of an inadvertent whistle. This would be an untimed down.

### DEAD BALLS

- A play is ruled dead when the ball carrier's flag is pulled, the ball carrier's flag inadvertently falls off, the ball carrier steps out of bounds, any part of the ball carrier's body other than hands touch the ground, the ball carrier lets the ball hit the ground, a penalty occurs, QB runs out of time or after a touchdown or extra point is scored.
- There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground, unless the ball carrier loses control of the ball moving forward. It will be placed where the carrier's feet are when possession is lost.

### SCORING

- A touchdown is equivalent to 6 points.

### EXTRA POINTS

- Following a touchdown, the offensive team is given an opportunity to score an extra point.
- 1 Extra Point is attempted five yards out from the goal line. **This is a "NO RUN" zone in the Madden and 9U+ Divisions.**
- 2 Extra Points is attempted 12 yards out from the goal line.
- **Extra Points can only be switched if you use a timeout, however it cannot be switched after a penalty even if you call a timeout.**
- An interception on an extra point will result in a failed attempt.

### SAFETIES

- A safety occurs when one of the following happens; the QB or ball carrier is downed in his/her end zone, the QB or ball carrier runs out of bounds inside his/her end zone, the quarterback or ball carrier fumbles the ball in his/her end zone, a bad snap resulting in the ball landing in offensive end zone, and an offensive penalty occurring inside the offensive end zone.
- If a safety occurs, the team that scored the safety will be awarded 2 points and will receive the ball on their 5-yard line.

### TIME SITUATIONS

- The referee may stop the clock at their own discretion.
- Each team is allowed one 60-second timeout per half.
- Timeouts do NOT carry over into the next half.
- **Games are played with two 12-minute halves and a two-minute half-time.**
- The clock will automatically stop at the one-minute warning of the second half only if the score of the game is within an 8-point differential.
- The clock will also stop during final minute of the second half of an 8-point game, to set the puck(s), for an incompleton, out of bounds, an extra point attempt, a penalty, a change of possession, when a first down is obtained.
- **A Mercy is declared once a 28-point differential has been obtained. The game is officially declared over, a maximum of 33 points will be listed for the point's differential.**

### FORFEITS

- To keep games on time, teams arriving more than ten minutes later than their originally scheduled start time will forfeit the game unless coming directly from a different field at the tournament.
- The Event Liaison, not field official will make that determination.
- Teams are required to have a minimum of four players to play a game; if a team is unable to field at least four players the game will be forfeited.
- A forfeit will result in a 14-0 result.



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### OVERTIME

- There is no overtime in Round Robin Play.
- If the score is tied at the end of regulation during Bracket Play, teams move directly into overtime.
- Coin toss determines possession. The team that did not call the opening coin toss will call the overtime coin toss.
- The team that wins the coin toss has the choice to take the ball first or defend first.
- Each team will have the option to go for a one- or two-point conversion. Both teams will drive into the same endzone.
- If an interception occurs the play is dead, and a change of possession will occur.
- If both teams are forced to go into a second overtime, both teams must go for two.
- **Third overtime will be one play from the 5-yard line the team to get the most yards wins. (You will be awarded one point.).**

### PROTEST RULE

- A coach has the right to protest one rule interpretation per game. The head coach **MUST** have a **copy of the rules present** and call a “**Protest Time Out**”. The protest must take place before the next play is started. The official must stop the clock and read the rule in question. If no agreeable solution is determined, then an event liaison may arbitrate and will have the final say. If a team protests a rule interpretation and is proven wrong, the team will be charged a timeout. If the team doesn't have a timeout then that team will be penalized for delay of game. **Note; you cannot protest a judgement call. A judgement call is at the official's discretion.**

### GENERAL PENALTY INFORMATION

- Only head coaches may approach the referee. Judgment calls cannot be argued.
- A game or half will not end on any accepted live ball defensive penalty or inadvertent whistle.
- Any offensive penalty in your own end zone results in a safety (2 points).
- A second defensive penalty on an extra point, will equate to the number of points the offensive team was attempting and be awarded.

### WARNINGS

- At the official's discretion a warning may be given in place of a penalty to a player or coach for any of the stated rules. Coaches and players should not expect to receive more than one warning if any.

### OFFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from Line of Scrimmage and Loss of that Down

- False start
- Offsides
- Illegal motion
- Offensive impeding
- Delay of game
- Coach interference – (remaining on the field during a play, exception: Lombardi Division may have 1 coach)
- Attempting to run from a “No Run Zone”
- Offensive pass interference
- Too many players on the field
- Improper equipment - (equipment tampering, lack of mouth guard, pants or shorts with pockets, jersey untucked, illegal cleats, missing or improperly placed flags)

### OFFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from the Spot of Infraction and Loss of that Down

- Flag guarding
- Illegal ball advancement – (jumping or diving to advance the ball, laterals)
- Intentional contact – (blocking, charging, tackling, tripping, pushing, holding, obstructing, stiff arming)

### DEFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from the Line of Scrimmage, Automatic First Down

- Roughing the passer
- Intentionally removing a receiver's flag belt before he/she contacts the ball
- Illegally rushing the quarterback



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- Too many players on the field
- Coach interference – (remaining on the field during a play)
- Improper equipment - (equipment tampering, lack of mouth guard, pants or shorts with pockets, jersey untucked, illegal cleats, missing or improperly placed flags)

### **DEFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from the Spot of Infraction, Automatic First Down**

- Defensive Pass Interference
- Intentional contact – (blocking, charging, tackling, tripping, pushing, holding, obstructing, stiff arming)

### **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT -**

- **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
- If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered.
- Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
- Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
- Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags. 6
- Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
  - Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
  - Keep comments clean and profanity free.
  - Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.

### **DEFENSIVE UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT- 15 Yards from End of Play, Automatic First Down**

### **OFFENSIVE UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT- 15 Yards from Line of Scrimmage and Loss Of Down**

### **EJECTIONS**

- Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct or Personal Fouls (Tackling, Pass Interference, and Charging)
- Intentionally Tampering with Equipment
- Bad Sportsmanship
- At the official's discretion, a player, coach, or fan may be ejected from the field for unsportsmanlike conduct or any flagrant violation of the rules. To eject a player, coach or a fan the referee will call an official's time out and get an event liaison **PRIOR** to making this call.
- Any person ejected will be asked to leave the field before play resumes. If an ejected player/fan/parent does not leave the field, a delay of game penalty will be called and will continue to be called until the situation is addressed.
- Any person ejected may be put on probation with possible suspension, depending upon the severity of incident.
- National Flag Football will have full discretion when imposing penalties.
- Any person ejected may be asked to leave the event premises.

### **SPORTSMANSHIP**

- Trash talking is not allowed. Trash talking is offensive language used against opposing coaches, players, officials, league personnel or fans. Officials will give one and only one warning. If this trash talking continues, the offender may be ejected from the game.
- If any league personnel or official witness any act of rough housing, including but not limited to, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or any other unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and that player may be ejected. Further disciplinary action may follow including event expulsion.
- After the game, teams are expected to form a line at midfield and congratulate the opposing team regardless the outcome of the game.

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NATIONAL FLAG FOOTBALL has and always will provide an atmosphere where players, friends and families can feel comfortable enjoying a day of football. Any players, teams, or family members that jeopardize that environment will be asked to leave. NATIONAL FLAG FOOTBALL operates under a **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**.