

2015

FINAL DRAFT HANDBOOK

FOR

NORTH SUBURBAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE

7-8 GRADES

AUGUST 15TH, 2015

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PART 1

2015 CONTACT INFORMATION

**NOTE: LEAGUE FEES ARE PAYABLE TO
BEMC L.L.C.**

2015 FEES

7TH GRADE/WEIGHT LIMIT: \$825.00 PER TEAM
8TH GRADE: \$1,025.00 PER TEAM (3 OFFICIALS)

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PART 2

2015 NORTH SUBURBAN FOOTBALL GENERAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

AREA DIRECTORS: YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING ALL OF YOUR COACHES WITH COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT AND FOR REVIEWING ITS CONTENTS WITH YOUR COACHES.

1. Divisions of Play - There are five (5) divisions of play:
 - 1) 7th Grade Unlimited
 - 2) 8th Grade Unlimited
 - 3) 7th Grade Weight Limit
 - 4) 8th Grade Weight Limit
 - 5) Mixed Grade Weight Limit (teams have both 7th and 8th graders)

7th Grade Unlimited - Rosters may consist of 7th graders only. There is no weight limit or weight restriction. An area may roster a 6th grader if it desires, provided that the parents of the 6th grader sign an informed waiver.

8th Grade Unlimited - Rosters may consist of 7th and 8th graders. There is no weight limit or weight restriction.

Weight Limit – In recent years we have begun moving towards separate divisions for 7th and 8th grade weight limit teams. Last year we had three divisions, 7th grade, 8th grade, and 7th-8th grade mixed. This arrangement was generally satisfactory, but far from perfect. There was still considerable disparity among some teams. We will still continue with all three divisions for 2014, with the following changes and clarifications;

1. The weight limit for the 7th grade division is 120 pounds.
2. The weight limit for the mixed grade division is 130 pounds.
3. The weight limit for the 8th grade division is 130 pounds.

Each division will have a separate schedule, and there will be no crossover games unless absolutely necessary. Mixed grade teams that are very strong or that have predominately 8th grade players are encouraged to play in the 8th grade division. The League Director reserves the right to move mixed grade teams to the 8th grade division or make other adjustments in an effort to balance competition and increase the number of competitive games.

2. “Reasonable Drawing Area” - It is the philosophy of this league that “outlaw teams,” “all-star teams,” or teams consisting of players outside a reasonable drawing area are prohibited. This league has quadrupled in size over the past five years because our coaches and area directors have remained committed to establishing a competitive league within reasonable, common sense parameters. As a general rule, players from a team must come from the same high school area or the same bona fide youth sports organization. (For example, Fridley and Andover draw their teams from their school district area. Osseo-Maple Grove draws from the defined parameters of the Osseo-Maple Grove Athletic Association, etc.) The league absolutely reserves the right to remove teams or areas that it finds are not abiding with the spirit of this philosophy. If you want to load up a team for the purpose of satisfying your ego, it is your absolute right to do so, but find somewhere else to play. ***Any program that turns away participants based upon ability raises some concerns in this regard.***

3. “Host Team” - A “host team” is defined as a team at whose fields a game is scheduled at on a particular date. The host team is responsible for having the field marked properly, the chains out, and the lights on for all scheduled games on that particular date. In addition, the host team must provide a medical scale or scale of similar quality for weight limit games, and a suitable sheltered area to conduct the weigh-in. ***Area directors are responsible for assuring that these items are provided for all games scheduled at their field.*** For example, for 3 games scheduled at 4:30, 6:00 and 7:30 on a Sunday at Coon Rapids Sand Creek Park, Coon Rapids ***is responsible for having the field ready at 4:15***, properly marked, chains out, scale and weighing area ready (for weight limit games) and lights on if needed. This responsibility continues for all of the games scheduled on that date.
4. “Home Team” - The “home team” is the second team listed on the schedule and is responsible for providing the chain gang. (Remember that the ***“host team”*** provides the chains) ***WE DO NOT SWITCH CHAIN GANGS AT HALFTIME.***
5. Officials - The bulk of our officials are scheduled through Arnie Mavis of Gopher State Officials Association. Arnie is in the process of transitioning out of his duties as officials coordinator, and starting this year Tim Ross and Eric Marquardt will be assisting Arnie with the scheduling and coordinating of officials. Tim and Eric have served as area directors and head coaches in this league for many years, and both have officiated a considerable amount of youth football. The vast majority of our officials are certified, are of good quality, and also officiate freshman, sophomore and varsity contests. That being said, they do blow calls. We are all competitive, but we must take extra steps to keep our teams and fans under control. There simply are not enough officials to go around, especially with us moving to 3 man crews for 8th grade games this year, and officials will not put up with any crap, especially from parents. We have done a decent job in controlling parent and coach problems, but our goal is to eliminate all such issues. Head coaches and area directors are reminded that they are responsible for keeping their parents, coaches, and fans under control. We can not allow coaches and parents to confront officials on the field or in the parking lot after the game. ***If a team is experiencing problems with an official, the area director of the team experiencing the problem should contact Arnie Mavis and John Swanson after the game.*** We will then deal with the problem in an objective manner. Remember that nothing positive ever results from a heated confrontation at the field.
6. Schedules - Teams with high quality lighted fields and teams from communities with multiple teams in a division usually get more “host games.” Please inform your coaches and parents of this fact in advance. In addition, coaches and parents should know that we usually schedule games in two, three or four game blocks in order to get officials. Some teams may only have two or three “host” games per season. It is not a bad idea to inform your parents in advance of the necessity of scheduling games in “blocks” and the fact that many teams may play only a couple of games at their “host” field. ***Area directors should also inform coaches and parents that we make a great effort every year to provide all teams with at least three “host games”, but sometimes this is impossible. Also note that we make every effort to minimize excessive travel.***

7. Rescheduling Games - Games can be rescheduled only in the most limited of circumstances. It is a tremendous hassle to reschedule games. ***Most of our scheduling “gaffes” in recent years have occurred when games are rescheduled, either to different dates or to different sites.*** We have experienced nightmares in several past seasons because of the weather and because several teams dropped out after the schedules were drawn. In the event it becomes necessary to reschedule, the area director who desires to reschedule must contact all of the areas involved (remember, there will be at least two, and maybe more games scheduled at a particular field on a particular date), notify John Swanson, and also contact Arnie Mavis. After the area directors, John and the official’s coordinators have agreed upon the rescheduling, the website coordinator will be contacted and change the schedules on the website. Do not merely contact the website coordinator and assume the rescheduling has been done. Missing one or two players or your star halfback is not an acceptable reason to reschedule. We will attempt to work around basketball and hockey tryouts if we know in advance when the tryouts occur, but coaches and area directors can not expect the league to make last minute adjustments. We no longer regard ***last minute notification of*** basketball or hockey tryouts as an acceptable reason to reschedule. ***Area directors must do everything possible in advance to obtain hockey and basketball tryout dates, so we can schedule around these conflicts without having to juggle schedules in late September and early October.***
8. Bad Weather- Most rescheduling, of course, is the result of bad weather, which we sometimes experience in excess. First, there is no guarantee that any games postponed due to bad weather can be rescheduled, especially once we get into October. On days where the weather has been bad throughout the day or previous night, games must be cancelled before 4:30 pm (weekdays) or 10:00 am (weekends) to be cancelled in advance. If not cancelled before these times, they may only be cancelled at the field. Our basic bad weather procedure is summarized as follows:
- a. Advance cancellation of an entire day’s schedule before the applicable 4:30 pm or 10:00 am deadline can only be initiated by Arnie or one of the other official’s coordinators. Advance cancellation of games at a particular playing site is normally initiated by the host site’s Area Director.
 - b. In all circumstances of advance cancellation, communication will normally be between Arnie and the Area Directors of the host playing sites affected. The Area Directors of each host playing sites are then responsible for contacting the Area Directors and coaches of the other teams playing at that site.
 - c. All communication in circumstances of advance cancellation should be by phone. The website and e-mail should not be relied upon to communicate advance cancellations. E-mails should be used to verify changes agreed upon by telephone, with the last step posting on the website after verification.

- d. If the games can't be cancelled in advance before the applicable cancellation deadlines, the games can only be cancelled at the field. The Area Director or designated representative may cancel the games at the field before they start if he or she determines that the field is unplayable or weather conditions at that site are too severe to play the games. If the Area Director or designated representative cancels the games in this manner, they should attempt to contact the Area Directors and coaches of the teams playing later games at that field on that date.
 - e. Once a game has started, officials shall determine whether a game should be suspended. Games that have completed the first half of play shall count as completed games. Suspended games that do not count as complete games shall only be completed if they have an impact on division championships or a wild card playoff qualification, as determined by the League Director.
 - f. Cancellation at the field automatically applies to all games at that field on that date. A game suspended mid-game means that subsequent games at that field on that date are cancelled.
9. Website – We now have an excellent website that includes schedules, standings and other relevant league information. Coaches are required to report scores to the Website Coordinator after each game. Both the winning and losing coach of each game should report the game score. Remember, it does us no good to attempt to keep standings if we don't receive accurate scores from all games. Problems with scheduling, officials, parents or field sites should be directed to John Swanson and the official's coordinator, and not to the website coordinator. The website coordinator is not responsible for fielding complaints and the website is not the venue for registering complaints.
10. Communication – Now that we have moved into the 21st Century with a website and electronic communication, we must make sure that we do not overly rely on the website and e-mail correspondence to the exclusion of voice communication. It is always a good idea to confirm a change that appears on the website or appears via e-mail with a telephone call, or to confirm an agreement reached over the telephone with an e-mail.
11. Lines of Communication- Parent and coach complaints and scheduling issues should first be addressed to the Area Director, John Swanson, or the official's coordinators. It is not the Website Coordinator's job to field complaints or initiate schedule changes. The Website Coordinator's duties are only to post schedules, scores, and standings.
12. Parent and Fan Control-Area Directors and their coaches are responsible for the behavior of their parents and fans. If necessary, Area Directors should mark their fields in such a way to maintain a reasonable distance between the field and fans. Area Directors are also reminded that in the 7th and 8th grade league, teams are on opposite sidelines, with fans on the same sideline as their team. This is the rule unless field set-up prohibits it. Area directors are required to notify John and Arnie in advance if this is the case. We continue to have issues with parents, and will no longer tolerate any type of offensive or abusive behavior from parents or other fans. These problems are not restricted to any particular community. Every community has had issues with out of control parents and fans at one time or another. Our officials have been instructed not to tolerate any such behavior.

PLAYING AND MISCELLANEOUS RULES

National Federation Rules apply, with the following modifications:

1. Ten minute book rule stop time quarters, except that the referee will start the clock when the chains are set after a change of possession, unless the clock has been stopped for another reason. This is the “old” high school clock rule. We have found that this modification is needed to enable the games to be completed in 90 minute blocks. Coaches should report officials who do not use proper time procedures immediately to Arnie Mavis and John Swanson. This is not “modified” stop time or any other type of timing method – it is high school book rule with the sole modification discussed above. All coaches should be advised that we play “book rule stop time” with the sole adjustment described above.
2. We are moving back to the regular rule for extra points - one point for a conversion kick, two points for a conversion run or pass.
3. In the event of a tie game, only one (1) overtime period will be played (unless the game is a playoff game). If the game remains tied after one overtime, it ends in a tie. ***Coaches may not waive or modify this rule.***
4. Teams may use either a regulation ball or the next size down from regulation. The “name” of the next size down used to be “intermediate”, but is now referred to as “youth” by Wilson and Nike, but are referred to by different names by other manufacturers (“junior” by Rawlings, for example). As a general rule, a ball designated as appropriate for ages 12-14 by the manufacturer is an appropriate ball for our league. Balls designated for younger ages are not appropriate. Questions regarding ball size should be directed to John Swanson. Teams may use their own ball when they are on offense, but must arrange to get the ball in quickly. Officials become frustrated when this is not done efficiently. Any cleats legal per National Federation rules are allowed, except metal tipped cleats, and players are encouraged to wear rubber all-purpose cleats. Teams are encouraged, but not required, to number their offensive players consistent with National Federation rules. If a team is not able to number their players consistent with National Federation rules, they should advise the officials of this fact before the start of each game.
5. The league reserves the right to ban players, coaches, or parents for repeated acts of unsportsmanlike or abusive behavior. This has been a rare occurrence during the many years this league has been in existence. Area directors are ultimately responsible for policing the behavior of their coaches, players and parents, and most have done an excellent job. If a team has problems with a particular official, the problem must not be addressed on the field. The area director should contact Arnie Mavis or another official’s coordinator and John Swanson to resolve the problem after the game. We have removed a number of officials over the past several years for lack of effort, excessive tardiness, or lack of professionalism. ***Players or coaches who are ejected from a game are automatically suspended from the entire next game. A second ejection during the same season will result in the player or coach being suspended for the remainder of the season. Coaches and Area Directors are required to notify both John Swanson and Arnie Mavis if a player or coach has been ejected.***

6. Coaches are strongly encouraged to meet with the officials before each game, and review the playing rules. We have experienced a few occasions over the years where the officials were confused about the level they were officiating and the rules. For example, it is strongly suggested that coaches meet with the officials, and remind them: “This is North Suburban 7th grade, we play ten minute stop-time quarters, two points for a kick, etc.” Most of the time, the officials will know, but it is a good idea to review this with the officials anyway.
7. There are no special restrictions on offenses, defenses, blitzing or anything else. This is straight football. ***There are no minimum playing time requirements, although the league strongly encourages teams to, at a minimum, play all of their players 1/4 to 1/3 of each game (discipline and attendance issues, of course, excepted).*** Each area is free to set their own playing time policies, however, and the league is not the playing time police. We encourage coaches and area directors to worry about their own program, and not worry about the other guys. Any person with any amount of common sense, experience, and intelligence knows that the programs that play the most players are the programs that are the most successful at the high school level. If a team decides not to play all of their players, that is their business, and their long term problem. ***The league may, however, place teams that it knows do not play all of their players in the toughest available division.***
8. “Host Team” - The team at whose fields games are scheduled at on a particular date is the “host team” and is responsible for having the field marked properly, the lights on, the chains out, and (for weight limit games) a quality scale and sheltered weigh-in area available for all games scheduled on that night.
9. “Home Team” - The second team listed on the schedule is the home team and is responsible for providing the chain gang. We do not switch chain gangs at halftime.
10. Weight Limit League - The weight limit for the weight limit league is 130 pounds for 8th grade and mixed grade, and 120 pounds for 7th grade. There are no longer weigh-ins before each game. The weight of each player will be verified by the Area Directors and the League Director at a preview prior to the start of the season. No protests regarding weight will be heard except for players added to rosters after the weight verification process has been completed.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. Reporting Scores - Both winning and losing coaches should report the score of each game to the Website Coordinator. Remember that regardless of the mechanism for reporting scores, whether via web, e-mail, fax, or voice mail, the system requires coaches to report. Problems with scheduling, officials or field sites should be directed to John Swanson or Arnie Mavis, and not the Website Coordinator.
2. Cooperation - We all are competitive, we all want to win, and this league encourages high-level competition. Please remember, however, that this league has prospered because the coaches and directors have tempered their competitiveness with common sense, reasonableness, and a focus toward the long-term. Many of our coaches and area directors no longer, or have never had kids playing, and are committed to the long-term success of this league and of football in general. Please remember that football gets squeezed by the single-sport nuts, and football will not maintain its popularity unless we do things to encourage maximum participation.

3. Serious Disputes - Please do not get John Swanson and Arnie Mavis involved unless there is a serious problem that cannot be resolved. John can be contacted on hid cell anytime at, 763-232-5758;
4. Playoffs- We have abbreviated playoffs that take place during the first week of November. The playoffs are single elimination. For the Weight Limit division, the top two teams from each division qualify. For both the 7th Grade Unlimited and 8th Grade Unlimited divisions, a total of eight teams will qualify. The format for selecting teams may be the top two teams in each conference, the champion in each conference and “wild-cards”, or some combination of both. On occasion, we have added teams when special circumstances warrant. We will not determine the format until we know how many conferences we have in each grade level.
5. Playoff Eligibility- Only games within each division or conference count towards standings. Non-conference or “cross-over” games do not count except as a tie breaker. In the event of a tie, the first tiebreaker is head to head competition, and the second tiebreaker is overall record, including non-conference games. The League Director has, on occasion, added an extra wild card team when the League Director determines in his sole judgment, that special circumstances warrant the addition.
6. Make-Up Dates Due to Bad Weather- We have found that it is extremely difficult to coordinate make-up games due to bad weather. We have now found it necessary to designate make-up dates in advance. The following procedures will not apply to make-up dates:
 - a. The designated make-up dates are Sunday, October 18, Monday, October 19, and Tuesday October 20.
 - b. There is no guarantee that any games cancelled because of weather on or after MEA week can be made up. In the event we have excessively bad weather and a backlog of make-up games, only games that need to be played because they impact playoff eligibility will be made up.
 - c. In cases where only a limited number of games are impacted (i.e. bad weather only at Andover and Ramsey involving the cancellation of 4 games) Arnie and John may authorize the teams to reschedule on their own. In such cases the teams involved will have 3 days to reschedule. If the teams cannot agree within 3 days, the League will reschedule on one of the designated make-up dates.
7. Fair Play Study - Andrew White, a University of Minnesota doctoral student in Kinesiology, is conducting a study on the impact of the “Fair Play” system in youth football. This system has been adopted by a significant number of youth hockey leagues with considerable success. Mr. White has proposed a two year study involving this year’s 7th graders. For 2014, one division of 7th graders will utilize the program, and the others will not. For 2015, a second division will also utilize the program, with the third division not taking part in either year. Teams with excessive unsportsmanlike conduct and similar penalties will receive negative standings points. Information regarding this program has been previously distributed to area directors. University of Minnesota students will monitor the teams who participate in this program, so coaches and area directors will have no additional duties. Implementation of the program will be fully discussed with participants prior to the start of the season.

8. Safety- It is imperative that all coaches go through concussion education prior to the start of the season. Areas that have not had their coaches go through a program will not be allowed to participate. An on-line education video is available through the MYAS, MSHSL and NFHS websites. All coaches should review the MSHSL heat index competition guidelines, which are also available on the MSHSL website.

In addition, all areas are encouraged to register with, or at a minimum, review the Heads-Up tackling program sponsored by USA football. Regardless of whether an area elects to register with the Heads Up program, all coaches should be teaching the principles of “Heads Up Tackling.”