

**2023**

**HANDBOOK**

**FOR**

**THE TWIN CITY NORTH YOUTH  
FOOTBALL LEAGUE  
2-6 GRADES**

**FINAL DRAFT  
JULY 25, 2023**



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# PART 1

## 2023 CONTACT INFORMATION

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Website Fee is \$80 per team payable to BEMC LLC

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## PART 2

# TWIN CITIES NORTH YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE RULES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

## *TWIN CITIES NORTH YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE RULES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES*

**1. Introduction** - The Twin Cities North Youth Football League (“TCYNFL”) is an informal association of communities located in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis and St. Paul organized with the intent to provide a football league for youths in grades 2-6.

**2. Philosophy and League Functions** – The league is organized with the intent to promote, organize, and coordinate the activities of its member communities with the goal of enhancing the quality of football in the Twin Cities area. The league is an informal organization, and operates with a minimum of rules, regulations, policies, and procedures. League members believe that the focus of the organization should be on providing youths with the opportunity to play football and increasing overall participation in the sport and should not be on the personal agendas of various adults who are not interested in the long-term growth of the sport.

The basic operating functions of the league are summarized as follows:

2.1 Provide a simple and functional framework that allows teams from the various participating communities to play each other, thereby allowing participating teams to play teams from several different communities.

2.2 Establish a uniform set of playing rules and provide training for referees to maintain consistency in the enforcement of playing rules.

2.3 Develop and maintain game schedules for each grade division among the participating communities, including a playoff system for those communities that desire to participate in a post-season playoff.

2.4 Provide a mechanism and authority for receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints.

2.5 Establish registration deadlines.

**3. Organization Bylaws** – The TCNYFL functions on as informal basis as possible. Operation of the TCNYFL is governed by the following simple rules:

3.1 Commissioner – Participating communities will elect a commissioner in July of each even numbered year. The Commissioner will serve a two (2) year term. The commissioner is responsible for coordinating and running meetings, maintaining league records, including meeting minutes and community contact information, initiating the scheduling process, revising, and distributing league rules, monitoring the registration process, and acting as the final arbiter of any disputes that might arise.

3.2 Scheduling and Website Coordinator - The TCNYFL will employ a Scheduling and Website Coordinator, who will be selected and supervised by the Commissioner. The Scheduling and Website Coordinator will be paid directly by the member communities on a “per team” basis, at a rate agreed upon by the Commissioner and Scheduling and Website Coordinator.

3.3 Community Representative – Each participating community will select one (1) person as their TCNYFL representative. This person will be responsible for attending TCNYFL meetings and coordinating all TCNYFL activities with their community.

3.4 Meetings – The TCNYFL will conduct two (2) preseason meetings in the summer of each year. Meeting dates, times and places will be determined by the Commissioner. The Commissioner may call special meetings as needed. Notice of all meetings will be sent via e-mail or in other written form.

3.5 Confirmation of Participation – Each participating community must confirm their participation in the upcoming season no later than June 1. Confirmation must be sent to the Commissioner by e-mail or other written form.

## **TCNYFL PLAYING RULES**

**1. Composition of Divisions and Teams** – The league will have four (4) grade divisions, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (one division), 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Participants must play in their appropriate grade division, unless the participant exceeds age guidelines, or unless the participant elects to play in an older grade. Requests for a player to play down a grade must be made to the league director in advance and may be approved if circumstances warrant. Any participant that elects to play in an older grade is required to have his or her parents sign an informed consent form. Participating communities are prohibited from turning down participants based upon ability, and “hand picked teams”, “select teams”, and “all-star teams” are prohibited. Teams are generally comprised of participants from the same school district, community, or park area. [Participating communities and organizations must be overseen by some type of independent board that has the authority to take corrective action regarding fan, coach, and player behavior.](#) Communities that field more than one team in a division must construct their teams based upon geography or an equi-draft system. Community representatives are responsible for the composition of their teams and assuring that all players are properly registered and equipped. Please review Section 7 in detail.



**2. Weight Restrictions** - The restrictions on the weight of ball carriers are as follows:

2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: 90 pounds; 4<sup>th</sup> grade: **105 pounds**; 5<sup>th</sup> grade: 125 pounds; 6<sup>th</sup> grade: 135 pounds

These weights must be verified no earlier than the player's community's last regularly scheduled registration date. Players over these weight limits must have a red stripe affixed to their helmet. These players may not line up in the offensive backfield or at wide receiver. They may line up at tight end, but under no circumstances may run the ball or receive a pass from the tight end position. Overweight players must play on the first line on a kickoff receiving team. Overweight players may only run the ball in the following circumstances: ***a. Fumble Recovery; b. Pass Interception;***

Each community must weigh its players no earlier than the community's last regularly scheduled registration date, and provide complete rosters, including the names and weights of all players who are overweight. If a team believes that an opponent has allowed an overweight player to carry the ball, the team must have its community representative contact the community representative of the opposing team after completion of the game. The individual community representatives of the communities involved will then arrange for a weigh-in. If the player in question weighs-in more than four (4) pounds over the ball carrier limits described above, the game will be forfeited and the player in question will be prohibited from carrying the ball in subsequent games. All violations of the weight restriction rules must be reported to the Commissioner.

***3. Game Administration*** - The following procedures apply to the administration of league games:

3.1 The "host team" (the team at whose field the game is being played at) is responsible for having the field in playable condition, having the field marked properly, and having the chains out. The host team is also responsible for providing and paying for a minimum of two qualified officials. This responsibility is for ***all games scheduled at the host site on a particular date, regardless of whether the host has teams participating in all the scheduled games.*** *The league will schedule "neutral site games" only when necessary.*

3.2 Each team occupies opposite sidelines. Fans are on same side as their team unless space prohibits. *For games played at high school stadiums, all fans must be in the stands. On fields where there is a restraining fence, all fans must be behind the restraining fence. On fields where there is no restraining fence, the field must be marked with a restraining line or other restraining marking a minimum of ten yards from the sideline, and all fans must remain behind the restraining line or restraining marking. If it is impossible to set the restraining line at 10 yards, it shall be set as far back from the sideline as possible.* The team listed second on the schedule is responsible for providing the chain gang. The chain gang shall be on the same side of the field as their team. We do not want the chain gang to change at halftime. Teams are responsible for cleaning up their sideline after games.

3.3 Games may be postponed before the teams have arrived at the field only by the community representative of the host team, and only for inclement weather or unplayable field conditions. In the event a community representative elects to postpone a game before the participating teams have arrived at the field, the community representative must notify the community representatives and coaches of all other teams affected by the postponement. Once a game has started, the decision to postpone a game may only be made by the game officials. Coaches and community representatives of teams who have had games postponed must contact the Scheduling and Website Coordinator to reschedule the game. There is no guarantee that games can be rescheduled.

3.4 Coaches and community representatives are responsible for the behavior of their respective players, coaches, and fans. Coaches are prohibited from smoking during games or practices, and alcohol consumption by coaches, officials and spectators is prohibited at games or practices. Unsportsmanlike or abusive behavior will not be tolerated. *The TCYNFL reserves the right to suspend or permanently ban players, coaches, spectators, and entire teams who exhibit unsportsmanlike or abusive behavior.* Game officials have the authority to order an ejected player or coach, or any spectator exhibiting unsportsmanlike or abusive behavior, from the game premises. Failure to abide by such an order will result in immediate forfeit of the game by the offending team.

3.5 The coaches of both teams are each responsible for reporting the game score to the league website.

3.6 Playoff formats will vary from year to year based upon weather, time constraints, and the number of teams in each grade division. The Commissioner will determine the playoff format in early October. The TCYNFL believes in simple, short playoff formats. The TCYNFL does not provide trophies or awards for either regular season or playoff champions. Participating communities are free to provide whatever awards their community feels are appropriate for their teams and players. Teams have the option of participating in a playoff, a single bowl game, or not participating at all.

3.6 Protests or complaints regarding officials or unsportsmanlike or abusive behavior must be submitted by the community representative to the Commissioner and the community representative of the other team involved within twenty-four (24) hours of the incident.

**4. Modifications to Playing Rules** - In general, National Federation rules apply to all TCNYFL games with the following modifications:

**4.1 *Playing Field*** – The playing field for the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade division is only 80 yards long. All major penalties on the 80-yard field are ten (10) yards instead of fifteen (15) yards, except for unsportsmanlike conduct, which shall remain at fifteen (15) yards on the 80-yard field. *Communities may, if necessary, use 80-yard fields for 4-6 grade, but should notify all other communities in advance of this necessity.*

**4.2 Declared Punts** – In all grade divisions, all 4<sup>th</sup> down punts must be declared, and the officials will acknowledge the declared punt to both teams and their respective coaches. When a 4<sup>th</sup> down punt is declared, no player on either team may move until the punter has kicked the ball. In the event the punter fumbles the snap, he or she is allowed to pick the ball up and kick the ball. Other players may not move until the ball is kicked. *In all grade divisions teams also have the option of not punting and turning the ball over to the opponent by declaring this to the officials before the snap. This declaration will result in a twenty (20) yard walk off in lieu of the punt for 2<sup>nd</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades, and a twenty-five (25) yard walk off for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.* For teams that elect to punt, the offense is required to have seven (7) players on the line of scrimmage for declared punts. The penalty for early movement in a declared punt situation is a warning for the first infraction by a team, and a penalty of five (5) yards for each subsequent infraction by the same team.

At all levels, the league emphasizes that the center can not be touched until the snap has been completed and the center has an opportunity to lift his hands and head to protect himself.

**4.3 Coach on Field** - Each team may have one (1) coach on the field or in the huddle in the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade division, *and for the first two (2) scheduled games in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade division. Coaches are not allowed on the field or in the huddle for the remainder of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade season and are not allowed on the field or in the huddle in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.*

**4.4 Other Modifications to Penalties** – All other penalties will be penalized per National Federation book rule.

**4.5 Extra Points** – All extra points will be played from the two (2) yard line. Teams receive one (1) point for a run and two (2) points for a kick or pass.

**4.6 Modifications to Timing Rules** – Games will consist of four (4) ten minute (10) minute quarters. The quarters will be *National Federation book rule stop time, with the following exceptions:*

- a. After a change of possession, the clock will start after the chains have been moved and set, and the ball has been spotted ready for play.
- b. *In the event one team is twenty-eight (28) or more points ahead at halftime the clock shall continue to run in all circumstances except team time outs and injuries. In the event one team is seventeen (17) or more points ahead at any time in the fourth quarter, the clock shall continue to run in all circumstances except team time outs and injuries. These modifications shall continue until the team behind cuts the deficit to less than seventeen (17) points.*
- c. Halftime shall be five (5) minutes.

- d. In instances of extremely warm weather, regardless of the actual heat index, the officials have the discretion to lengthen play stoppages for time outs and quarter breaks for the purpose of allowing players extra time for hydration. Officials may, at their discretion, also stop play mid-quarter for an extra hydration break. Coaches are encouraged to discuss this issue with officials before the game starts on extremely warm days.
- e. Officials will use reason and common sense on delay of game penalties for snaps at all levels, especially 2-3 and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Coaches should expect that the delay of game penalty will be more strictly enforced at the end of close games.
- f. Time outs are three (3) per half.

**4.7 Size of Footballs** – The 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 4<sup>th</sup> grade divisions will use the equivalent of a Wilson or Nike “Pee Wee” size football, appropriate for ages 6-9. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> grade divisions will use the equivalent of a Wilson or Nike “Junior” size football, appropriate for ages 10-12. Note that different manufacturers use different designations, so check to see what ages are designated appropriate by the manufacturer.

**4.8 Playing Time** – Teams participating in the TCNYFL are required to play to the extent possible, all players in at least one-half (1/2) of each game. Teams with 22 or less players should therefore start each player on either offense or defense. Teams with more than 22 players are required to devise an equitable system to assure that all players participate in as close to one-half (1/2) of the game as reasonably possible. The TCNYFL acknowledges that no playing time system will result in a perfect equalization of playing time, and the TCNYFL does not consider itself the “playing time police.” Individual areas are free to set their own policies regarding attendance and discipline and are free to limit playing time for those reasons. Coaches are required to notify the opposing coach before the game if the coach intends to limit one or more of his or her player’s participation for such reasons. Although the TCNYFL is not the “playing time police”, the league will investigate complaints that coaches are not abiding by the spirit and intent of this rule. ***The league absolutely reserves the right to forfeit games and ban coaches, teams, and communities who are not abiding by the spirit and intent of this rule.***

**4.9 Overtime** – In the event of a tie game at the end of regulation time, only one (1) overtime period shall be played. An overtime period is defined as each team get one possession from the 10-yard line. If the game remains a tie after one (1) overtime period, it shall be recorded as a tie game, unless the game is a playoff game. Tie playoff games shall be played out until one team wins. National Federation rules govern overtime play except that the teams shall not switch ends of the field at the end of each series.

**4.10 Restrictions on Defenses** – The following restrictions apply to defenses. Defenses who do not comply with these restrictions will receive one (1) warning. Subsequent infractions will result in a delayed dead ball five (5) yard penalty, with the offense having the option of taking the play or the penalty. ***Blitzing is not allowed at any grade level.***

- a. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 5<sup>th</sup> grade divisions, the defense must line up in a 4-3 alignment in accordance with the diagram in this document. In the 6<sup>th</sup> grade division, a team may line up in either a 5-2 or 4-3 alignment, per the diagram in this document. In a 5-2 alignment the nose guard must be head up on the center, and the defensive tackles must be head up on the offensive tackles, all in a legitimate 3-point or 4-point stance. No shading is allowed, although they may slant at the snap. In the 4-3 alignment the defensive tackles must be head up on the offensive guards in a legitimate 3-point or 4-point stance and may slant at the snap. In both defensive alignments defensive ends must line up as prescribed in the attached diagrams and may slant at the snap. All linebackers must align a minimum of three (3) yards off the line of scrimmage. Defenses may adjust the alignment of their linebackers and defensive backs to defend trips and quads formations.
- b. The defense is permitted to line up in any alignment inside their own five (5) yard line (goal line defense). Any players off the line of scrimmage in the goal line defense are still prohibited from blitzing.

**4.11 Restrictions on Offenses** – All offensive formations are required to have seven (7) players on the line of scrimmage, and three (3) players on the line of scrimmage on each side of the center, with at least two players lining up adjacent to each side of the center. In other words - no “unbalanced” lines. There may be no more than a 3-foot split between the center and guards, and the guards and tackles.

**4.12 Kickoffs** – No kickoffs **AT ANY LEVEL**. On 80-yard fields the ball will start on the 30 yard line after a score. On 100-yard fields the ball will start on the 35-yard line after a score. After a safety, the ball will start at midfield regardless of field size.

**“Onside Kick Option”** – Because there are no kickoffs, any team that is tied or behind may exercise the option of running one (1) offensive play from their opponents fifteen (15) yard line after the extra point try is completed. This try shall be timed from the snap until the conclusion of the play. If the team gets in the end zone on the single play, whether by actual gain or by penalty or series of penalties, or by a combination of penalty and actual gain in the subsequent play, the team shall retain the ball at midfield first and ten. If the team is unsuccessful, the opponent shall retain the ball at midfield first and ten.

*For example, a team scores and is still down by four points after the extra point try, with one minute left in the game. The team elects the onside kick option. Before the first snap, the defense jumps offside. The five-yard penalty is assessed, and now the team exercising the option has only ten yards to go to “score” to retain the ball. On the subsequent snap, the team throws an incomplete pass but there is a pass interference penalty – half the distance to the goal. The team then snaps the ball again, now from the five-yard line, and scores. The score of course doesn’t count, but the team retains the ball first and ten at midfield. Any defensive penalty results in an additional snap after assessment of the penalty. Any offensive penalty, whether live ball or dead ball, negates the try in its entirety with the defensive team getting the ball first and ten at midfield.*

**5. 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 on the NFHS website, and, in addition, MYAS offers an educational module. In addition, coaches should review the MSHSL heat index competition guidelines, which are also available on the MSHSL website. All communities should have their coaches go through Trusted Coaches/USA Football training or a similar training/education program.

**6. COVID** - We anticipate fewer COVID protocols and will follow whatever MDH protocols are in place when the season begins. However, each team should have a COVID control person, and infected players and coaches must be reported to the League and MDH and comply with current protocols. Obviously, all league participants are encouraged to get vaccinated.

**7. 2023 Rule Additions/Clarifications/Points of Emphasis** – Based upon difficulties that we have encountered in recent seasons, we needed to add the following materials to the handbook. It is imperative that all communities are conversant with these materials. Also remember that we experienced issues with a significant number of communities over the past two seasons. Some of these issues were partly the result of COVID and the myriad of adjustments we had to make to operate over the past two seasons. Some were the result of lack of communication and our allowing programs to add or subtract teams at the last minute. And finally, many were the result of poor coach/fan behavior and the brutal fact that nobody wants to officiate anymore. We are committed to correcting all these issues.

***7.1 Age and Grade Restrictions*** – All requests to for a player to play down a grade must be submitted to the Commissioner. Such requests have occasionally been approved, usually in cases where the Americans with Disabilities Act applies. Often, approval is conditioned upon the participant not carrying the ball. Generally, however, we will not allow a player to repeat the same grade.

Directors are reminded that our teams are formed by grade, and not by age, subject to the restrictions in this document. Just because a player is a bit young for his/her grade doesn't mean that the player is entitled to play down a grade. We have maximum age restrictions also. If a player does not meet the following age restrictions, the player must play up a grade. These restrictions are quite liberal in our opinion:

6<sup>th</sup> Grade – player must be 12 or younger as of August 15, 2023

5<sup>th</sup> Grade - player must be 11 or younger as of August 15, 2023

4<sup>th</sup> Grade – player must be 10 or younger as of August 15, 2023

2/3 Grade – player must be 9 or younger as of August 15, 2023

***7.2 Compliance with Reasonable Drawing Area*** – Teams should avoid recruiting/accepting players from another community that plays in this league without first discussing the player with their community director. We understand that a significant number of players are “dual eligible” (meaning that they live in one community and attend school in another). These players may play either where they live or where they go to school. We also note that we have several independent teams that do not have a carefully defined drawing area. They are reminded that this is not an “all-star” league and that they must be reasonable in how they put together their teams. We will entertain exceptions upon good cause, but only if the Directors are satisfied the exception is not enabling a team that is attempting to circumvent the rules to gain an advantage.



**7.3 Rosters** – Most communities put together rosters for their teams, and we have never before required teams to submit rosters. We are now to the point that we are requiring teams to submit rosters no later than August 28. Teams may of course add players after that date. We have no intention of requiring that rosters are submitted prior to the start of the season. Rosters should include full name, address, contact information, date of birth, grade, school attended, and player’s weight. If the directors request to review a roster, that roster will be reviewed only by the directors and will not be shared with any other individuals.

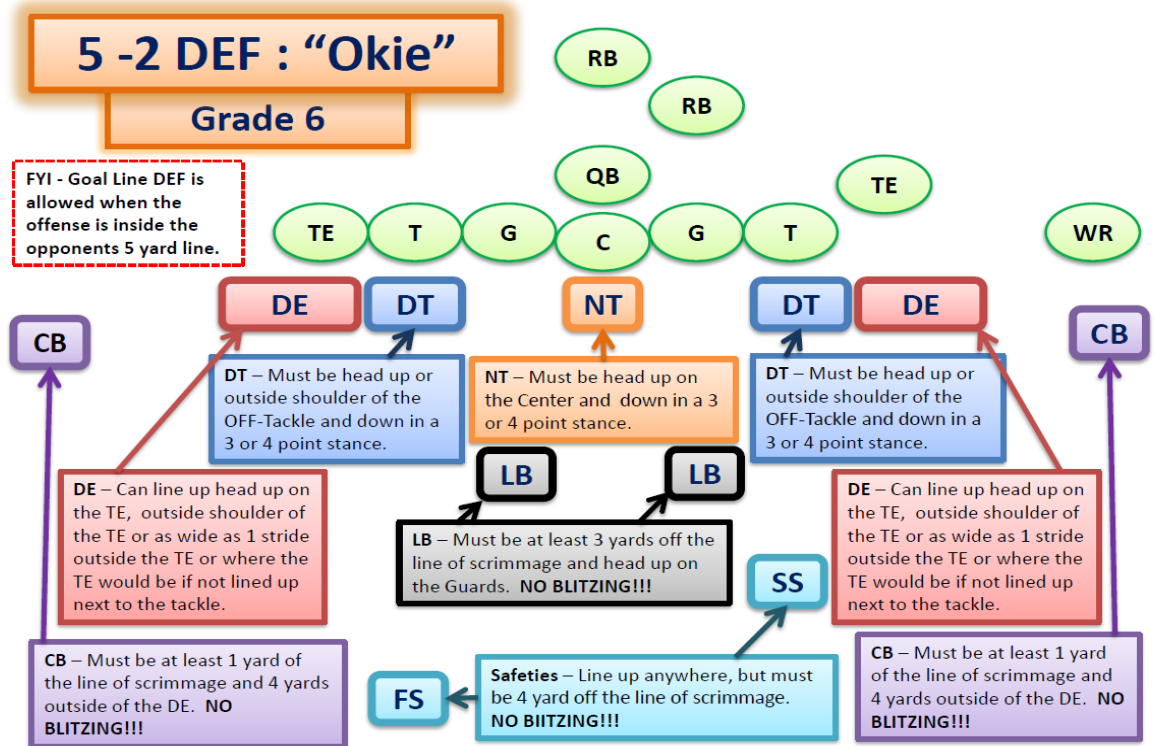
**7.4 Officials** – Communities are reminded that they are responsible for obtaining experienced officials for all games played in their community. We have been working hard to secure more officials for this and believe that we have had some success. We are going to spend a significant amount of time in June and July reviewing and assessing each communities’ access to their own officials. Hopefully, the league will have some officials available to help communities that are short of their own officials.

One of the things that has enabled this league to work is that we have always scheduled several games on “neutral” fields, i.e., Zimmerman plays Phelps at Fridley. In a situation like this Fridley would obtain and pay for the officials. Doing this when needed has two benefits, first it cuts down on travel (playing halfway between opponents) , and second it helps the overall scheduling process. During the past two years, however, the number of games on neutral fields has increased significantly, primarily due to some communities having limited field availability. We still plan on scheduling some games at neutral sites, but will significantly reduce the amount of these games. Communities are reminded that in some circumstances, they may be charged by the host team when they play at a neutral site for half the cost of officials for that game. This may or may not happen, but the host community reserves that right. We believe that the instances of neutral site games will be reduced this year and it will be a rare occurrence (if at all) where a host team feels it needs to charge, but it is important that we bring this up in advance.

**7.5 Bad Behavior by Coaches and Fans** – Bad behavior continues. It originates from many different communities, and involves abuse of officials by coaches and fans, official, coach and player baiting by fans – occasionally racially motivated, fans storming the field, blatant consumption of alcohol and marijuana on the sidelines (which is a violation of the law) and leaving massive amounts of garbage on the sidelines after games. This behavior will not be tolerated, and if a community is not prepared to educate their coaches and fans in advance and severely discipline violators, the team or teams in question will be removed. Things improved last year, but we still need improvement. We have lost too many good officials and continue to be at risk of losing good playing fields.

**7.6 Size of Teams** – We continue to see instances of teams having more than 30 players (even 40 players), usually resulting in lack of playing time for many players. Communities are advised that this is highly discouraged and teams that elect to have large rosters will be strictly held to the league playing time guidelines. We don’t want to hear “we only have one coach” or “this is what the kids and parents want” nonsense. Figure this out and plan for this. There are lots of solutions and *we have always been flexible in accommodating communities that elect to split into 2 teams.*

*7.7 Video Cameras/Drones – The use of video cameras to scout future opponents is forbidden. If you want to scout a future opponent, do it the old-fashioned way with pencil and notebook. The use of drones for any reason is forbidden,*

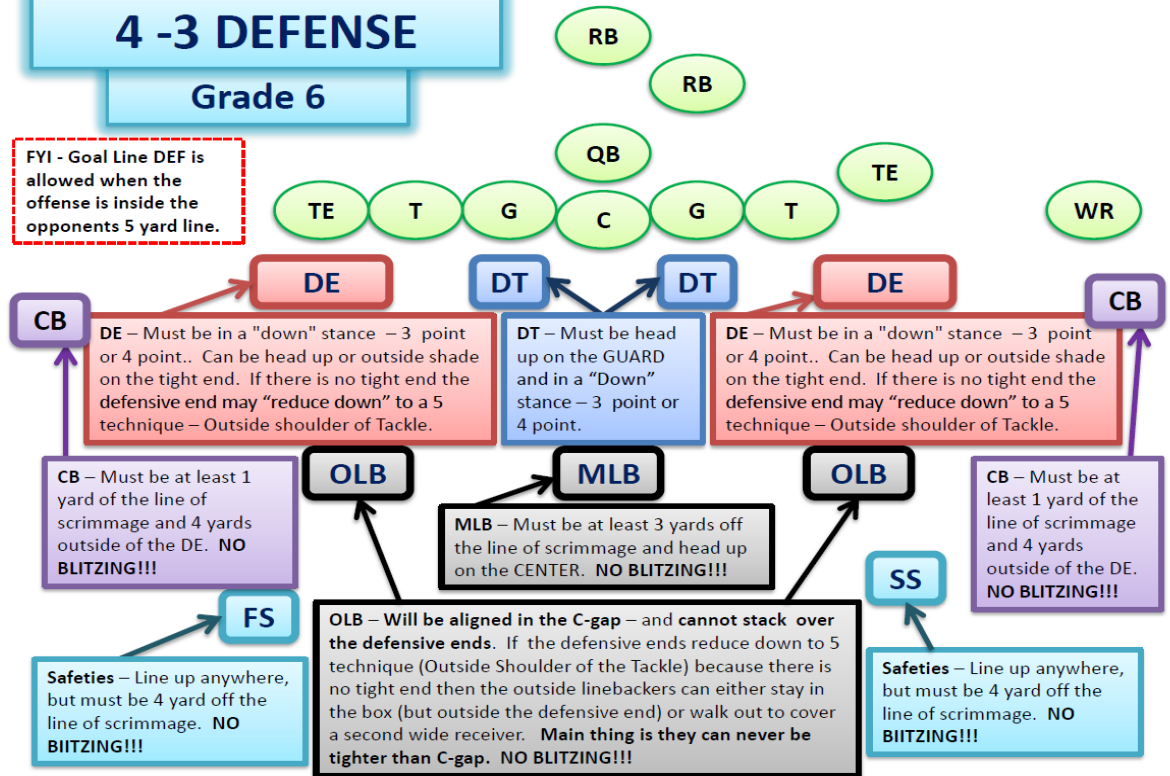




# 4 - 3 DEFENSE

Grade 6

FYI - Goal Line DEF is allowed when the offense is inside the opponents 5 yard line.



**OLB Must be at least 3 yards off the line of scrimmage, same as MLB**