

Fall Season: 2023
AAO GRIDIRON FOOTBALL LEAGUE (GFL)



Player Eligibility

The Gridiron Football League (GFL) is designed to prepare players for their future junior high school programs. Teams are based and formed by individual communities and school districts.

School District Based:

Students must play for the team in the school district where they live or attend school.

Private School Players:

Players who attend a private school that participates in the GFL, must play for their private school team. If their private school does not participate in the GFL, the player must play for the school district team where they live.

Neighboring School Districts:

Players who live in a neighboring school district that doesn't offer tackle football, may request to participate on a GFL team. Approval must be obtained by the League Director, the community organization, and specific team coach. Whenever their community school district provides a tackle football option, the player must return to their home team.

Game Day Procedures

Length of Games

- 3rd-4th Grade: Two 20 minute running clock halves.
- 5th-6th Grade: Two 25 minute running clock halves.
- Each team is allowed two timeouts each half of the game - (Time Outs Do Not Carry Over)
- There will be 5-10 minutes scheduled between games to allow transition of new teams / fans onto the fields.

Equipment Size of Footballs (composite, leather):

Teams must start with and use the same size ball throughout the entire game for their appropriate grade level.

- 3rd & 4th grade - Peewee / Youth
- 5th grade - Junior / Youth
- 6th grade - Junior / Youth

Game Play

- It is important for games to start on time. A team must forfeit if they are unable to play within 5 minutes after the scheduled start time.
- Pre-Game Coin Toss - Head Coaches + Head Official
- A team must have at least 10 players available to start a game.
- Games may be called by the League Commissioner for inclement weather or dangerous or poor field conditions.
- Officials will enforce 40 sec. play clock - for all divisions - (kept manually by head official or play clock operator)
- No headsets may be used by either team.
- **AAO Field Games: Scores Clocks / Table** will be parallel to concessions located between Field 1 West end zone and Field 2 East end zone - score clocks will be operated by the **Visiting Team**
- A 3 person **Chain Crew** will be the responsibility of the **Home Team**. (operated on the North side of the AAO fields) - (Fan Sideline)
- If Game Officials consult on field during game play, they must stop the clock.

Half Time Procedure

- Half time is 5 minutes.

Suspended Games

- If a game is halfway through the second half, the game will be considered complete if the referee suspends the game and feels it cannot be continued within what he feels is within a reasonable time.
- If a game is suspended within the first half and cannot be completed at that time, the entire game will be rescheduled for a later date. If the game is suspended at halftime or before the start of the 2nd half, the game will be rescheduled and the play will start over at the beginning of the 2nd half. Same score & possession as if the 2nd half had never started. If a game is suspended after 10 min. (3rd & 4th) / or 15 min. (5th & 6th) of play in the second half, it will be considered completed and the current score will be considered the final. Every effort will be made to complete a suspended game at a later date. However, if an unfinished game cannot be rescheduled, the game can be deemed completed by the approval of the league commissioner and the score considered final.

GAME RULES

Team Sideline:

- Coaches and Players are expected to remain inside their designated team box.
- **(AAO Fields)** - One coach and 2-3 substitute players are allowed to travel down the sideline with their team into their opponents sideline - to better instruct team and speed substitutions.

Sideline Coaches:

- Only a total of **5 USA Certified Coaches** are allowed on the sideline during games.
 - All designated coaches must wear their coaching pass and lanyards to be recognized.
 - **No other sideline personnel will be allowed other than the 5 USA Certified Coaches**
 - **No Ball Boys**
 - **No Water Boys**
 - **No Video Filming** (needs to be done on fan sideline - preferably far East & West corners)
 - Sideline Special Guests are limited to ONLY - Middle / High School coaches that participating players will play for in the future and AAO staff.
 - Only **ONE** coach will be allowed to address the head referee per offensive / defensive series. Assistant coaches need to communicate through their head coaches...

3rd Grade Coach - Field Responsibilities

- During 3rd grade games, one coach from each team is allowed on the field -one on offense and one on defense. The coaches are encouraged to keep the flow of play going and not delay the game with lengthy additional coaching points. An official may remove a field coach at any time if the official feels the coach is a disruption to the game. If a coach is removed from the field in a 3rd grade game - *there will be NO REPLACEMENT* and the violating team will forfeit their on field coaching privileges. The purpose of this rule is to speed up play and allow for more plays per game and improve the instructional purpose of the league.
 - 3rd grade on-field coaches must remain a minimum of 5 yards behind the official when the ball is snapped. **There is no coaching on the field once the ball is snapped.** The coach must remain quiet. Failure to follow these rules will first result in a verbal warning - second offense > 5 yard (delay of game penalty) - third offense > 15 yard (unsportsmanlike) - penalty and the coach being removed from the field.

Defensive Line of Scrimmage: (DLOS)

- Any player standing shall be a minimum of 2 yards off the ball, > unless they are being counted as one of the five defensive players on the line of scrimmage - then they must be outside the tackle box.
- Defensive teams may only have 5 players on the line of scrimmage - **this rule does not apply to defensive backs / defensive secondary.**

- Any defensive lineman **inside the tackle box** must be in a three or four point stance.
- Any violation of this rule will result in - first > 5 yard (delay of game penalty) - second offense > 5 yard (delay of game penalty) - third offense will result in a 15 yard (unsportsmanlike) penalty.

Short Yardage:

- Short yardage will be defined as 3 yards or less when a team is defending its goal line or three yards or less on any fourth down attempt anywhere on the field.

Team Sideline Boxes:

- COACHES & PLAYERS as well as all team personnel are expected to remain inside their team box. First violation of this rule will result in a sideline warning - any further violations will result in a 15 yard unsportsmanlike penalty.

Kicking Game:

- **3rd & 4th grade:** Offensive teams will start each half and follow each PAT attempt with the ball being placed at their own 30 yard line.
- **5th & 6th Grade:** Teams will begin each half with a live kickoff - (2 per game) Gold Div only

Punts:

- On fourth downs - all punts must be **declared by the offensive team by the time the play clock is reset by the head official** - once play clock has been reset - **teams will be forced to go for it on fourth down.**
 - If an offensive penalty occurs on fourth down, the last 2 minutes of the game, the clock will be stopped and the game clock will not begin again until the snap of the ball.
 - Offense will still have to declare again once the penalty has been marked off and before the play clock reset.
 - the punts will be moved 30 yards from the line of scrimmage and you can not punt if you are at, or inside, your opponent's 30-yard line.
 - Punts are a strategic part of the game. The 10 yard line is the deepest "you can pin down" a team.

PAT:

- 3rd & 4th Grade: Ball will be spotted at the 3 yard line
 - Scoring a **RUN** attempt will be worth one (1) point.
 - Scoring a **PASS** attempt will be worth one (2) points.
- 5th & 6th Grade: Ball will be spotted at the 3 yard line
 - **Kicking P.A.T. attempt will be worth (2) points. (High School Stadiums Only!) No rush but jump/hands up only in place.**
 - **Snap for the PAT must be a minimum of 3 yards or a maximum of 5 yards.**
 - **Offensive play (run or pass) will be worth (1) point.**
 - (AAO Fields) - 3rd & 4th grade P.A.T. rules will be in effect..

Safety:

- If a safety occurs the defensive team will receive 2 pts. + receive possession of the ball at the 50 yard line.

Overtime:

- Overtime will be “**sudden death**”.
 - **One Play-One Score**
 - Coin Toss will determine offensive and defensive teams to begin the first overtime series.
Points will be awarded exactly like PAT. - (3rd & 4th Grade)- 1pt. for a successful run play / 2pts. for a successful pass play. (5th & 6th Grade) - Kicking P.A.T. = two points and offensive plays = one point (High School Stadiums Only)
 - Each team will be given one play to score. After their play is completed their opponent will be given the same option to run a play from the 3 yard line.
 - Teams will switch roles starting the second series and every other series in overtime - meaning the team who deferred first will now play offense first and the first offensive team will now start on defense. Teams will switch back every new series during overtime. Teams will continue to trade plays until one team scores more points than the other or 5 minutes expires.
 - **If the game is still tied at the end of 5 minutes, each team will get 1 play from the 40 and the team that produces the most yardage off of that play will win.**

Mercy Rule:

- **The mercy rule will go into effect with a 24 point lead anytime within the second half.**
 - The clock will continue to run as normal - time-outs will be granted - however - the clock will continue to run.
 - Coaches are expected to practice good sportsmanship toward your opponent
 - Coaches are encouraged to substitute their starting skill players (QB, RB, WR) during the mercy rule.
 - If the mercy rule is already in effect by the end of the first half and both coaches agree with approval by the head official > the game time may be shortened in the second half to 15 minutes (3rd-4th Grade) and 20 minutes (5th-6th Grade).

Rule Violations

- Violations of Gridiron League rules will be acted on and penalties assessed by the League Commissioner as outlined and approved by the Executive Rules Committee.
- The penalty or penalties assessed against an organization, coach, parent, or player can be one or more of the following:
 - Ejection from games
 - Forfeiture of game or games
 - Suspension of coaches or individuals within an organization
 - Probation
 - Any action deemed appropriate by majority vote of the Officers including the

permanent removal from the league.

- Assaults, verbal abuse, profanity, display of poor sportsmanship or rule violation by a coach, parent, participant, club official or guest at a league function will not be tolerated.
- Alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs or the consumption of alcoholic beverages or drugs will not be allowed by anyone at a league function. Penalties will be dealt accordingly.
- **Any coach, player or spectator ejected from a league game or scrimmage will be automatically suspended for the next 4 quarters of regulation play - as subject to the Arkansas Activities Association ejection ruling.**
 - Suspended coaches and players will be allowed to attend team practice.
 - Suspended coaches will not be allowed into the facility during their suspension failure to comply will result in team forfeiture of the game.

Disputes

- Will first be heard by the League Commissioner with an attempt to completely resolve. The Commissioner will resolve the majority of issues. If the issue can not be resolved then it will be heard by the appointed members of the Executive Rules Committee.

Ejections

- Player ejections may be reviewed by the head official in consultation with the League Commissioner and enforced or reverse the disqualification prior to the next game. Officials also have the authority to send a player to the sideline for a period of time without formally ejecting the player from the game. The player may only return to the game with the permission of the head official. If the player is ejected, disqualified or decision reversed, it is the responsibility of the head coach to notify their member director and league commissioner immediately following the game.
- A coach ejected from a second game will be suspended for the remainder of the season and will not participate in team practices. To return to coaching next season the coach must apply for approval from the League Commissioner.
- **Protesting A Game:** To protest an action or game by a coach to the League Commissioner, the coach or persons involved in the incident must do the following within 24 hours of the incident:
Submit a written statement on the incident in protest to their Member Director.
- The parties involved may be asked to speak to the League Commissioner and provide evidence to support the complaint. The Commissioner will then review the evidence and declare a ruling within "seven" (7) days of the filing of the written incident statement.

The League Commissioner may modify the League Rules when the League Commissioner deems it in the best interest of the league/tournament to do so and all teams will be bound by any such change.

Questions, contact: brad@aaoteam.org