

2024 Flag Football Overview

Field

U16 and younger 60 x 25 yds, U18 older 70 x 25 yd. NAFA U20 will be 60 x 25 yds to ease field lining.

Footballs

Girls: TDJ or larger recommended U16 and older. K2 or larger allowed U14 and younger.

Boys: K2 U10, TDJ U12, TDY U14, TDS U16 are recommended. Teams are allowed to use one ball size smaller than recommended. K2=Nike Jr. Pee wee, TDJ=Nike Vapor One Pee wee, TDY=Nike Vapor One Youth, TDS=Nike Vapor One Official

Uniforms

Jerseys tucked in, no pockets on shorts, flags must be different colour to the uniform.

Equipment

Mouthguards are mandatory. No jewelry, if can't be removed it must be covered and secured. Soft brimmed hats only. No baseball hats (forward or backward).

Timing

Two 20 minute halves. Clock stops for time outs and injuries. Each team has 2 time outs per half. They cannot be carried over. Playoff overtime will be sudden death converts with each team getting an equal amount of convert attempts. The NAFA flag football overtime is different from the Football Canada Flag Football Rulebook. No overtime in regular season.

Coin Toss

-winning team can take first half choice or defer to second half

-selecting team can choose offence, defence or end

Positioning Principles

Right of Place and Right of Way offer an excellent starting point for understanding the interaction between offensive and defensive players on the football field. Here is the order of RoP and various RoW.

1. Right of place 2. Right of way of Rusher to the Quarterback 3. Right of way of receivers 4. Right of way

General Play

Play begins with the offensive team taking possession of the ball on its 5 yd line. It has 3 downs to cross midfield. If the offense fails to get a first down or score then the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5 yd line. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the 5 yd line of the offense. The ball is snapped from the line of scrimmage. There is a 1 yd neutral zone extending forward from the line of scrimmage that the defensive players cannot line up in or enter before the snap of the ball. Laterals and handoffs are permitted behind the line of scrimmage. Forward passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage are allowed. A forward handoff is not considered a forward pass. The offense is allowed any number of players in any direction of motion prior to the snap. The player who receives the ball from the center is the quarterback. The quarterback cannot advance the ball by running. Once the quarterback gives the ball to another player then he/she ceases to be the quarterback and if they receive the ball back then he/she can advance the ball by running.

When the offense enters the "The No Run Zone" (last 5 yds before the opponent's goal line) the offense can use handoffs and laterals but cannot advance the ball with a running play (forward or backward handoff). Fake pitches and fake handoffs are allowed. Once in the No Run Zone you cannot run again even if a play loss or penalty takes you out of the No Run Zone.

Scoring

Scoring occurs when the offensive player is in possession of the ball and the mid-point of his/her hips has broken the plane of the goal line.

Touchdown 6 points. Convert from the 5 yd line 1 point. Convert from the 10 yd line 2 points

Interception return on any convert 2 points. Safety 2 points

Huddle

25 seconds to put in a play after teams have regrouped in a reasonable amount of time.

Center

The center is the player who gives the ball to the quarterback via a snap. The snap must pass between the center's legs to the quarterback. The center cannot receive the ball back directly from the qb. No minimum or maximum distance. The center must face the defense with feet straddling either side of the bean bag marking the line of scrimmage.

The Rusher

All players who rush the passer must be 7 yds from the line of scrimmage (every part of his/her body) at any point after the ball has been snapped. This 7 yd distance is marked with a bean bag. Any number of players may rush the qb. The rusher must rush continuously in a direct path towards the qb if they are in the pocket or rolling out. A rusher lined up within 2 yds of the 7 yd bean bag is entitled to a free direct path to the quarterback. If the rusher is lined up outside this distance or the rusher switches sides once the center is ready to snap the ball then the rusher is not entitled to a direct path to the qb. A rusher cannot line up directly over the center but must be at least 1 ft over from the center. Any deliberate or accidental contact with the thrower's upper body or his/her arm while he/she is attempting to throw the ball will result in an illegal contact penalty. If the offensive player's arm is in motion forward while attempting a pass when his/her flag is pulled by a rusher the play will be allowed to continue. All defensive players are eligible to rush from anywhere on the field once the ball has been handed off or lateraled or there is a fake handoff or lateral.

The Ball Carrier

Spinning and dipping is allowed, but the ball carrier cannot dive forward or jump to avoid a defensive player or gain yardage (no diving). The ball carrier must try to avoid a defensive player. A defensive player cannot step into an opponent's path at the last moment. When a player has his/her flag pulled while in possession of the ball, the ball is spotted at the location of the ball when the ball carrier's flag has been pulled.

Passing Game

The quarterback has 7 seconds to throw the ball after the ball has been snapped. When flagging the qb the flag must be pulled before the qb has begun forward motion of the ball in the process of throwing a forward pass. There is no intentional grounding penalty in flag football. If the ball is handed off, lateraled, fake handed off or fake lateraled the 7 second rule is no longer in effect. A pass is completed when a receiver gains possession of the ball even for an instant. This is especially true when the receiver has control of the ball then loses control because of bodily contact caused by an opponent or the ground. There are no fumbles. The ball becomes dead at the spot at which the ball is dropped. If the quarterback does not gain possession of the ball during the snap, the ball will be placed at the line of scrimmage and result in a loss of down. If a lateral or hand off results in the ball falling to the ground then the ball is dead and is scrimmaged from the spot of last possession with loss of down.

Coach on the Field (NCAFA specific allowance)

In U14 and younger divisions one coach at a time can be on the field with his/her team. The primary purpose of the on field coach is to help the team call plays in the huddle and help the players line up to run a play. A few seconds before the play starts and while the play occurs all coaches must remain quiet. On field coaches are not allowed to initiate discussion with the referee. Any advice can be given by the coach in the huddle. Outside the huddle advice should only be given about how to line up or how to run a play. It shouldn't be about who to throw to or who to cover. If a coach returns to the sideline while the play occurs then the coach is allowed to communicate as a normal off the field coach. While on the field the offensive coach cannot run a no huddle offense. If trying to run a quicker huddle please warn the opposing defense. Referees are instructed to give one warning about improper on field coaching. After 1 warning a referee can call an improper coaching 5 yd penalty. After 2 penalties the offending team loses the right to have an on field coach.

QB Ball in Hand Start of an Offensive Play (NCAFA specific allowance)

The center must line up in the correct center position and remain there motionless as a regular center. The center does not have to be in a "down" stance. The qb must line up directly behind the center (any distance) and remain motionless with the football extended out in front of him/her. The play will start when the ball is pulled back toward the qb. An offense is allowed to switch between a ball in hand start to a play or a regular snap start to a play.

Rule 21 – Penalties

1 Penalties

- 1.1 All penalties are 5-yards, the down will be repeated, and will be assessed from the line of scrimmage unless otherwise noted.
- 1.2 In a single penalty application, all penalties may be declined except dead ball fouls, major fouls, and penalties that stop the current play (flag guarding, delay of pass, etc.)
In a multiple penalty situation against one team, penalties that stop the play may be declined by the non-offending team if they choose to accept another penalty.
- 1.3 Yardage on penalties, except Major fouls, will not exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line from the line of scrimmage. The yardage on a Spot Foul is assessed from where the infraction took place. The ball can never be placed closer than the 1-yard line.
- 1.4 Game officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- 1.5 Games cannot end at half time or the end of the game on an accepted penalty.
- 1.6 Penalties after an interception shall be assessed after the return is over and/or the play is blown dead.
- 1.7 Defensive spot of fouls penalties that occur behind the line of scrimmage will be applied at the line of scrimmage instead of the spot.
- 1.8 If a dead ball foul occurs after a scoring play, the non-offending team will get the choice to apply the yardage to the convert or to the start of the next possession.

2 Defensive Penalties

- 2.1 Offside – player(s) lined up across or crossing the Line of Scrimmage at the snap of the ball.
- 2.2 Disconcerting Signals – signals to distract or simulate offensive signals prior to snap.
- 2.3 Illegal Rushing – Crossing the line of scrimmage from inside the 7-yard rusher bean bag provided the ball has not been faked, pitched, or lateralled.
- 2.4 Pass Interference – both contact & non-contact that interferes with an offensive player catching a ball while it is in air, also includes screening & pushing off at Spot of Foul (Automatic First Down).
- 2.5 Illegal Contact – physical contact such as impeding, redirecting, obstruction, blocking, holding, & tackling as well as any lower body contact with an offensive player throwing the ball at Spot of Foul (Automatic First Down).
- 2.6 Illegal Flag Pull – Pulling a flag of a player before they have the ball. Spot of Catch if caught, LOS if dropped (Automatic First Down).
- 2.7 Roughing the Passer – any contact with the passer's arm, head, or neck area while throwing the ball, including the ball in the passer's hand. 10-yard penalty (Automatic First Down).

3 Offensive Penalties

- 3.1 Delay of Game – ball is not snapped within 25 seconds. Play whistled dead. Clock stops.
- 3.2 Delay of Pass – ball is not passed by Quarterback in 7 seconds, play whistled dead. (Next Down)
- 3.3 Offside – player(s) lined up across or crossing the LOS at the snap of the ball.
- 3.4 Illegal Snap – Center lifting or moving ball to simulate a snap. Play whistled dead (Next Down).
- 3.5 Flag Guarding, Jumping or Diving – ball carrier uses any part of their body or ball to prevent flags from being pulled or advancing the ball, play is whistled dead at Spot of Foul. (Next Down)
- 3.6 Rusher Interference – impeding a rusher's direct path to Quarterback.
- 3.7 Interference – impeding, redirecting, obstruction, blocking with no contact, play whistled dead at Spot of Foul.
- 3.8 Illegal Contact – physical contact such as impeding, redirecting, obstruction, blocking, holding & tackling (Loss of Down).
- 3.9 Pass Interference – both contact & non-contact that interferes with a defensive player's catching a ball while it is in air, also includes screening, pushing off and pick plays (Loss of Down).
- 3.10 Illegal Running Play – a quarterback running with the ball across the Line of Scrimmage without any transfer of the ball. Play whistled dead.

3.11 Illegal Forward Pass – when a second forward pass occurs, or when a forward pass occurs after the ball has crossed the Line of Scrimmage. Play whistled dead. (Next down).

4. General / Major Penalties

4.1 Illegal Participation – A player who goes out of bounds shall not participate further in that play unless that player went out of bounds as a result of a slippery field, contact with an opponent, or a missed flag pull. This is a LOD penalty if committed by the offense and Repeat Down penalty if committed by the defense.

4.2 Illegal Substitution – Any offensive player substitution after the center is prepared to snap the ball and any defensive player substitution during the play.

4.3 Game Interference – any substitute players, coaches or spectators interfering with ball, player or official while ball is in play.

4.4 Leaving Team Area – players or coaches leaving their designated team sideline area or crossing the middle of the field into the opponent's team area.

4.5 Objectionable Conduct – players, coaches, teams or spectators using profane language or gestures, threats, demeaning or intimidating remarks & actions, persistent arguments, fake injuries, delay of game or targeting players to initiate contact will result in a 5-yard penalty. Any player, coach, team or spectator receiving a second Objectionable Conduct penalty during a game will be ejected from that game.

4.6 Major Foul – Any obscene act, acts of roughness, or unfair play by players, coaches, teams, or spectators will result in a 15-yard penalty being assessed against their team as well as LOD or AFD from the appropriate spot. If the intent of the infraction was to cause bodily harm, or unfair play has made a mockery of the game, the penalty can result in a game ejection. Major fouls cannot be declined and must always apply their yardage in full. They will be applied after all live ball penalties have been assessed.

5. Multiple Penalties

5.1 In a situation where only one team commits multiple live-ball penalties the non-offending team will accept only one of the penalties to be applied.

5.2 When both teams commit one or more penalties in the same play, the down shall be replayed from the previous line of scrimmage- regardless of yardage or point of application (LOS vs spot). The only exception to this is Major Fouls which must be accepted and their yardage applied in full. NOTE: Dead ball fouls will be applied after live ball penalties are assessed.