



**2011  
FLAG FOOTBALL  
RULES  
MANUAL**

**This is a Christian league that strives to exalt  
Jesus Christ in all that we do.**

**Rules will be conducted under the NIRSA Rules of the  
game with the enclosed additions, exceptions, and  
clarifications.**

*Rules edited and compiled by:  
Pray then Play Sports Executive Committee*

Version 1.3  
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## **RULE 1**

### **The Game, Field, Players, and Equipment**

#### **Section 1. General Provisions**

##### *Article 1. The Game*

The game shall be played between two (2) teams of seven (7) players each. Five (5) players are required to start the game and avoid a forfeit. If only five (5) players are present on one team, both teams shall take the field with five (5) players. If, at any point during the game, either team goes below five (5) players for any reason, the game shall be in forfeit. The team with less than five (5) players shall forfeit to the opposing team. The game may be rescheduled entirely at the discretion of the Affiliate Director of the field location. Teams are only allowed two (2) games during the regular season with the five (5) player exception. Those games must be reported as such when scores are turned in to affiliate director. After two (2) games all future games will be considered a forfeit. During any playoffs teams must have a minimum of seven (7) players for the game to begin. Teams not having a minimum of seven players for a playoff game must forfeit and those games may not be rescheduled.

##### *Article 3. Supervision*

The game shall be played under the supervision of two (2) to four (4) officials. It is strongly recommended that a minimum of three (3) officials be used during playoff and championship games. The official with senior experience officiating shall be designated the Referee. The Referee is accountable to, and under the direction of, the Affiliate Director of the field location.

##### *Article 4. Team Captains*

One (1) coach per team will be designated the team captain. The team captain must be present to make all decisions and shall be the only person who addresses the officials. No player or assistants may address the officials during the course of play. *Penalty: Illegal Procedure – Three (3) Steps from Succeeding Spot*

##### *Article 5. Persons subject to the Rules of the Game*

Team representatives, including players, nonplayers, spectators, coaches, trainers, and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the Rules of the Game, and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

##### *Article 6. Referee's Authority*

The Referee has authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the Rules. The Referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game. The Referee is both accountable, and under the direction of the field location Affiliate Director. The Referee has authority to adjudicate any contradictions in, or misinterpretations of, all rules immediately without further consult.

##### *Article 7. Game Official's Authority*

The game officials shall assume authority for the contest, including penalizing unsportsmanlike acts, thirty (30) minutes prior to the scheduled game time or as soon thereafter as they are able to be present. The official's jurisdiction extends through the Referee's declaration of the end of the fourth period or overtime.

##### *Article 8. Player(s) and Player Participation*

All players must play a minimum of one (1) half of the total game time, to include any extended periods.

*We play as an honor league; no penalty will be administered on the field. Continuing violations will be addressed by the Affiliate Director at his/her discretion. Warnings will be issued throughout the games if violations appear apparent.*

*Article 9. Player Roster*

All coaches need to have available a player roster. The roster must include the players' names and corresponding shirt numbers. Each player's shirt number must coincide with the number issued at the beginning of the season, unless the Affiliate Director has authorized a different number. Once rosters are finalized at the beginning of the season no roster additions are allowed without the approval of the affiliate director and other affiliates associated with the league.

*Article 10. League Structure*

PLEASE NOTE: This is an instructional league. Please start off not calling many penalties and progress through the season. Please take special care to teach the rules. Progress to calling a tighter game by mid-season. The player's should expect a tight game being called in the later half of the season.

*Article 11. Player Divisions*

The following shall govern the age brackets of all players:

<u>Division 1</u>	<u>Division 2</u>
4 – 6	10 – 12
7 – 9	13 – 14
	15 – 17

*Article 12. Age Exceptions*

As a general principle, players may only "PLAY UP". Players may play either in their age appropriate bracket, or play in the next higher bracket. PLAYING UP must be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Affiliate Director and notated on the player's registration form by the initials PU in the lower right corner. Players may PLAY DOWN under very narrow guidelines. Extenuating circumstances must be present. Some rare examples of allowable PLAYING DOWN are children with special needs or with physical disabilities. Safety of all participants must remain paramount. PLAYING DOWN must be approved on a case-by-case basis by the National Director and notated on the player's registration form by the initials PD in the lower right corner. A form from the Affiliate Director detailing the circumstances for the exception shall be attached to the player's registration form.

**Section 2. The Field**

*Article 1. Safety Margin*

No hard and unyielding rigid fixtures (i.e., trees, poles, fences) shall be located within five (5) yards of the sidelines or ten (10) yards of the end lines, unless covered with at least ½" of closed cell, slow recovery rubber or other material of the same minimum thickness and having similar physical properties. NOTE: If in doubt, consider the safety of all paramount to the game.

*Article 2. Adjacent Fields*

When fields are located in close proximity, there must be a minimum of five (5) yards between "side by side" fields and ten (10) yards between "end on end" fields.

*Article 3. Field Size and Markings*

There shall be two (2) sizes of field used, depending on the age bracket of the players. Limited space may require the "field in a field" concepts.

The following shall be the field dimensions for Division 1:

60 yards in length, 80 feet wide, 10 yard end zones, 1<sup>st</sup> down markers every 10 yards

The following shall be the field dimensions for Division 2:

80 yards in length, 80 feet wide, 10 yard end zones, 1<sup>st</sup> down markers every 15 yards

#### *Article 4. Facility Limitations*

In case of facility limitations, distances of field length and width can be modified. However, end zones must always be ten (10) yards. If field length is modified, shorten all zones equally so they remain proportional.

#### *Article 5. Goal Line*

The entire width of each goal line shall be a part of the end zone.

#### *Article 6. Team Box*

On each side of the field a team box is designated for the teams, coaches, and authorized team attendants. This team box shall be located two (2) yards off the sideline and between the two (2) 1<sup>st</sup> down lines not being the mid field line or either end zone lines. When the field size is modified, so shall the team box. If teams can not agree on a team box, the Referee will conduct a coin toss. NOTE: It is permissible for both team boxes to be on the same side of the field. In such case, the boxes shall be separated by ten (10) yards at the mid-field line and extend to their respective end zones.

#### *Article 7. Pylons*

Soft pylons or cones shall be placed at the inside corner of each of the intersections of the sidelines with the goal lines and the end lines, and at the intersections of the end lines and inbounds lines extended.

#### *Article 9. Field Orientation*

It is highly recommended that fields be laid out in a north/south orientation when new facilities are planned.

#### *Article 10. Extra Point Try Line*

A line shall be drawn six (6) feet in length and approximately four (4) inches wide parallel to each end zone line. The line shall be placed one (1) yard from the goal line.

#### *Article 11. Neutral Zone*

At all times prior to the initiation of play, a neutral zone shall exist of one football length between Offense and Defense. This neutral zone is extended to the width of the distance between Offensive and Defensive lines of scrimmage when present on plays outside of the Extra Point Try line. *Penalty: Encroachment – Three (3) Steps*

*Exception: Center when straddling the ball for side snap or over the ball for traditional snap.*

### **Section 3. Game Equipment**

#### *Article 1. The Ball*

The official game balls shall be provided by the hosting Affiliate. The official game ball shall be pebble-grained leather and shall meet the recommendations for size and shape for the appropriate age bracket. The Referee shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball during play at his/her discretion. One ball must be agreed upon prior to the start of the game and shall be used by both teams. The officially recognized balls for the league are:

<u>Age Bracket</u>	<u>Ball</u>
4 – 6	Spalding J5PW
7 – 9	Spalding J5J
10 – 12	Spalding J5J
13 – 14	Spalding J5Y
15 – 17	Spalding J5Y

There are no requirements regarding ball pressure.

*Article 2. Ball Spotters*

Two (2) ball spotters are required. One shall mark the offensive line of scrimmage. The second shall mark the defensive line of scrimmage, one (1) yard away from the offensive line of scrimmage. It is recommended that the spotters be brightly colored beans bags or low profile cones. The scrimmage lines shall consist of the entire width of the individual spotters used.

**Section 4. Player Equipment - Required**

*Article 1. Jersey*

Players of opposing teams must wear contrasting colored shirts, or pinnies shall be used to distinguish teams. All players and coaches must wear their shirt during the entire game. Shirts must be tucked in at all times. No player or coach may alter his/her shirt (i.e., cutting off sleeves). That player or coach shall be ineligible to participate until an unaltered shirt is obtained. Only official shirts may be worn during the game. **No jersey, no play.** *Rule 1, Section 1, Article 9 applies as well.*

*Article 2. Pants/Shorts*

Each player must wear pants or shorts without any belt(s), belt loop(s), or exposed draw strings. The pants/shorts must be contrasting colors to the flags. Pants/shorts must be worn at waist height at all times. There shall be no visible undergarments during game play. It is recommended all players wear black pants/shorts.

*Article 3. Flag Belt/Flags*

Each player must wear a flag belt containing a minimum of two flags. The flag position shall be checked prior to each play. Flags must be properly attached prior to the initiation of play.

*Article 4. Shoes*

Shoes shall be made of canvas, leather, or synthetic material which covers the foot attached to a firm sole of leather, rubber, or composite material which may have cleats or be cleatless. Among the items which do not meet those requirements are gymnastic slippers, ski and logger boots, and other apparel not intended for football use. Cleats are limited to studs or projections which do not exceed ½” in length and are made with nonabrasive rubber or rubber-type synthetic material which does not chip or develop a cutting edge.

*Article 5. Penalty*

Failure to wear required equipment in Articles 1 – 4: *Equipment Infraction – Three (3) Steps*

**Section 5. Player Equipment – Optional**

*Article 1. Ace Bandage*

Players may use an ace bandage no more than two turns thick in any given area. It can be anchored at each end by tape not to exceed two turns.

### *Article 2. Gloves*

Players may wear gloves which must consist of a soft, pliable and nonabrasive material.

### *Article 3. Headwear*

- A. Players may wear a knit or stocking cap. The cap will have no bill. Players are not permitted to wear bandanas or rags. All headwear must be single-colored containing no graphics.
- B. Players may wear a headband no wider than 2” and made of nonabrasive unadorned single-colored cloth, elastic, fiber, soft leather or rubber. Rubber or cloth elastic bands may be used to secure hair.

### *Article 4. Knee Pads*

Players may wear soft, pliable basketball or wrestling knee pads on the leg, knee and/or ankle.

### *Article 5. Mouth and Teeth Protector*

It is strongly recommended that a mouth piece be worn by all players.

### *Article 6. Play Books*

- A. Players may carry a play book inside their clothing as long as it is not made of an unyielding material and is not visible. If carried on the field, a player must keep the play book rather than throw it on the ground.
- B. Players may wear a soft, pliable wrist/forearm band that contains plays.

### *Article 7. Sunglasses*

Players may wear pliable and non-rigid sunglasses.

## **Section 6. Player Equipment – Illegal**

### *Article 1. Illegal Equipment*

A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be permitted to play. This applies to any equipment, which, in the opinion of the Referee, is dangerous or confusing. The Referee shall be the sole judge of any equipment worn by any player, and may make any decision necessary to keep the game safe. Types of equipment or substances which shall always be declared illegal include:

- A. Headgear containing any hard, unyielding or stiff material, including billed hats.
- B. Jewelry.
- C. Pads, casts or braces worn above the waist.
- D. Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in, or detachable cleats. EXCEPTION: Screw-in cleats are allowed if the screw is part of the cleat. Cleats must be in good repair.
- E. Shirts which do not remain tucked in. Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt which does not remain tucked in. Shirts with an arm opening more than 4” below the armpit. The Referee will use a fist to measure the arm opening.
- F. Pants/shorts with any belt(s), belt loop(s), pocket(s) or exposed drawstrings.
- G. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped, and any other hard surface is covered with at least ½” of closed cell slow recovery rubber or other material of similar thickness and physical properties.
- H. Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on any equipment or exposed part of the body.
- I. Equipment which includes computers, or any electronic or mechanical devices for communication.
- J. Exposed metal on clothes or person. EXCEPTION: “O” or “D” rings used to secure flag belts.

- K. NO TOWELS ON THE FIELD. EXCEPTION: Towels used to keep the ball dry during inclement weather.
- L. Any equipment, clothing or covering that restricts access to the players flags.

*Article 2. Penalty*

Wearing any equipment in Article 1: *Dead Ball Foul - Equipment Infraction – Three (3) Steps*

**Section 7. Player Equipment – Missing**

When any required player equipment is missing or when illegal equipment is found on any incoming substitute or player, correction must be made before participation. An official's time-out shall be declared to permit prompt repair of equipment which becomes illegal or defective through use.

**RULE 2**

**Definitions of Playing Terms**

**Section 1. Ball – Live, Dead, Loose, Possession**

*Article 1. Live Ball*

A live ball is a ball in play and a dead ball is a ball not in play. A pass or fumble which has not yet touched the ground is a live ball in flight and can be caught and advanced by either team.

*Article 2. Loose Ball*

A loose ball is a live ball not in player possession (i.e., any punt, pass, or fumble).

*Article 3. In Possession*

A player is in possession of a live ball when he/she is holding or controlling the ball. A team is in possession:

- A. When one player is in possession
- B. While a punt is being attempted
- C. While a forward pass thrown by one of its players is in flight
- D. When it was last in possession during a loose ball

*Article 4. When the Ball is Ready for Play*

A dead ball is ready for play when the Referee sounds the whistle and signals "ready for play".

**Section 2. Bat**

A bat is intentionally slapping, striking, or redirecting the ball with the hand or arm.

**Section 3. Catch, Interception, Simultaneous Catch, Touching**

*Article 1. Catch*

A catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball which is in flight, and first contacting the ground inbounds or being contacted by an opponent in such a way that he/she is prevented from returning to the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball.

- A. If one foot first lands inbounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch or interception even though a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out-of-bounds.
- B. A catch by any kneeling or prone inbounds player is a completion or interception.
- C. A loss of the ball simultaneously with returning to the ground is not a catch or interception. NOTE: If in doubt, it is a catch.

### *Article 2. Interception*

An interception is the catch of an opponent's fumble or pass.

### *Article 3. Simultaneous Catch or Recovery*

A simultaneous catch or recovery is a catch or recovery in which there is joint possession of a live ball by opposing players who are inbounds.

### *Article 4. Touching*

Catching is always preceded by touching the ball; thus, if touching causes the ball to become dead, securing possession of the ball has no significance. Touching refers to any contact with the ball.

## **Section 4. Down and Between Downs**

### *Article 1. Down*

A down is a unit of the game which starts, after the ball is ready for play, with a legal snap and ends when the ball next becomes dead.

### *Article 2. Between Downs*

Between Downs is the interval during which the ball is dead between downs.

## **Section 5. Encroachment**

### *Article 1. Encroachment*

Encroachment is a term to indicate a player is illegally in the neutral zone. An entering substitute is not considered to be a player for encroachment restrictions until he/she is on his/her team's side of the neutral zone.

## **Section 6. Fighting**

### *Article 1. Fighting*

Fighting is any attempt by a player or nonplayer to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to, attempts to strike an opponent with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s), or foot (feet), whether contact is made or not.

## **Section 7. Foul and Flagrant Foul**

### *Article 1. Foul*

A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is prescribed. NOTE: If in doubt, it is not a foul.

### *Article 2. Flagrant Foul*

A flagrant foul is so severe or extreme that it places an opponent in danger of serious injury and/or involves violations that are extremely or persistently vulgar or abusive conduct.

## **Section 8. Fumble**

### *Article 1. Fumble*

A fumble is a loss of player possession other than by handling, passing, or punting the ball.

## **Section 9. Goal Lines**

### *Article 1. Goal Lines*

Each goal line is a vertical plane separating the end zone from the field of play. The plane of the goal line extends indefinitely beyond the sideline.

## **Section 10. Handing the Ball**

### *Article 1. Handing the Ball*

Handing the Ball is transferring player possession from the one teammate to another without throwing or punting it.

## **Section 11. Huddle**

### *Article 1. Huddle*

A huddle is two or more offensive players grouped together after the ball is ready for play and before assuming scrimmage formation prior to the snap.

## **Section 12. Hurdling**

### *Article 1. Hurdling*

Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over an opponent who is contacting the ground with no part of his/her body, except one or both feet.

## **Section 13. Kicks**

### *Article 1. Kicker*

The kicker is any player who legally punts or kicks the ball from a stationary tee. The kicker is a runner until he/she actually kicks the ball. Players of his/her team are known as kickers and any opponent is a receiver.

### *Article 2. Legal Kicks*

A legal kick is a punt by a player of the team in possession when such a kick is permitted by Rule. Any punt continues to be a punt until it is caught by a player or becomes dead. The first and second halves begin by a kick from a stationary tee.

### *Article 3. Punt*

A punt is made by Team A under restrictions which prohibit either team from advancing beyond their scrimmage lines until the ball is punted. A player becomes a kicker when his/her knee, lower leg, or foot makes contact with the ball before it strikes the ground.

## **Section 14. Loss of Down**

### *Article 1. Loss of Down*

Loss of down means loss of the right to repeat the down

## **Section 15. Muff**

### *Article 1. Muff*

A muff is an unsuccessful attempt to catch a ball, the ball being touched in the attempt.

## **Section 16. Neutral Zone**

### *Article 1. Neutral Zone*

The neutral zone is from the forward point of the football one (1) yard to the Team B scrimmage line and extended to each sideline. It is established when the ball is made ready for play.

## **Section 17. Passer**

### *Article 1. Passer*

The passer is the player who has thrown a legal forward pass. He/she remains the passer while the ball is in flight or until he/she moves to participate in the play.

## **Section 18. Passes**

### *Article 1. Passing*

Passing the ball is throwing it. In a pass, the ball travels in flight. A pass continues to be a pass until caught, intercepted, or the ball becomes dead. The initial direction determines whether a pass is forward or backward.

### *Article 2. Forward and Backward Pass*

A forward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction toward the opponent's end line. A backward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction parallel with or toward the passer's line. A pass continues to be a pass until it is caught or strikes the ground. A backward pass or fumble that hits the ground is ruled dead at the spot.

## **Section 19. Penalty**

### *Article 1. Penalty*

A penalty is a result imposed by Rule against a team or team members that has committed a foul.

## **Section 20. Removing the Flag**

### *Article 1. Flag Belt Removal*

When a flag is clearly taken from the runner in possession of the ball, the ball is declared dead and the down shall end. If a flag inadvertently falls to the ground from the runner in possession of the ball, the ball is declared dead at the spot where the flag lays. A player may not leave his/her feet to remove the flag.

### *Article 2. Contact*

In an attempt to remove a flag from a runner, the opponent may not in any way contact or initiate contact with the runner. An opponent may not hold, push or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove a flag.

## **Section 21. Screen Blocking**

### *Article 1. Screen Blocking*

Screen blocking is legally obstructing an opponent without using any part of the body to initiate contact.

## **Section 22. Scrimmage**

### *Article 1. Scrimmage Line*

The scrimmage line for Team A is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes through the forward point of the ball. The scrimmage line for Team B is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes one yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. Team B's scrimmage line may not extend past the goal line. A Team

A player is on his/her scrimmage line when facing his/her opponents goal line with his/her head or foot breaking the plane of the imaginary line drawn through the waist line of the snapper and parallel to the scrimmage line. The snapper is a line player. The snapper is the only player allowed to straddle the scrimmage line during a side snap. The width of both scrimmage lines shall be the entire width of the ball spotter.

#### *Article 2. Backfield Line*

To be legally in the backfield a Team A's player's head or foot must not break the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the nearest Team A player, except the snapper, on the scrimmage line.

### **Section 23. Shift**

#### *Article 1. Shift*

A shift is the action of one or more offensive players who, after a huddle or after taking set positions, move to a new set position before the ensuing snap.

### **Section 24. Tagging**

#### *Article 1. Tagging*

Tagging is placing one hand anywhere between the shoulders and knees of an opponent with the ball. NO TAGGING ALLOWED. If the runner loses his/her flag, either through regular play or inadvertently, the ball is dead at the spot of the fallen flag.

### **Section 25. Team and Player Designations**

#### *Article 1. Disqualified Player*

A disqualified player is one who becomes ineligible for further participation in the game.

#### *Article 2. Line Player*

A line player is any person on his/her scrimmage line when the ball is snapped.

#### *Article 3. Backfield Player*

A backfield player is any person who is legally behind that line when the ball is snapped.

#### *Article 4. Offensive and Defensive Team*

The offensive team is the team in possession or the team to which the ball belongs. The defensive team is the opposing team.

#### *Article 5. Player and Nonplayer*

A player is any one of the participants in the game. A nonplayer is a coach, trainer, other attendant, a substitute, or a replaced player who does not participate by touching the ball, hindering an opponent, or influencing the play.

#### *Article 6. Runner*

The runner is the player in possession of a live ball or simulating possession of a live ball. Once a player catches or intercepts a pass, he/she becomes a runner.

#### *Article 7. Snapper*

The snapper is the player who snaps the ball. He/she is a line player.

#### *Article 8. Substitute*

A substitute is a team member who may replace a player.

*Article 9. Team A and Team B*

Team A is the team which snaps the ball. The opponent of Team A is Team B.

**RULE 3**

**Periods, Time Factors, Substitutions**

**Section 1. Time Factors**

*Article 1. Coin Toss*

Three minutes before the start of the game, the Referee shall initiate a coin toss to decide certain factors of the game. The Referee shall designate which coach shall call the fall of the coin, then toss a coin in the presence of the opposing coaches. All officials shall be present for the coin toss.

The coach winning the coin toss shall have a choice of options for the first half or shall defer his/her option to the second half. The options for each half shall be:

- A. To choose whether his/her team will start on offense or defense.
- B. To choose the goal line his/her team will defend. The coach, not having the first choice of options for a half, shall exercise the remaining option.

*Article 3. Forfeit Time*

Game time plus five (5) minutes is forfeit time.

*Article 4. Start of Each Half*

Each half shall start by means of a kick off. The ball should be kicked from a stationary tee. Rules for punting apply.

**Section 2. Game Time**

*Article 1. Playing Time and Intermissions*

Playing time shall be forty (40) minutes, divided into two (2) periods of twenty (20) minutes each. The intermission between the first and second period shall be ten (10) minutes. When overtime is used, there will be a three (3) minute intermission. NOTE: Timing rules may be modified due to institutional program needs. When modifying timing rules, each period shall remain proportional.

*Article 2. Coaches Choice and Pinnies*

The second team on the score sheet shall have the choice of wearing pinnies, or deferring them to the first team listed on the score sheet.

*Article 3. Shortened Periods*

Before the start of the game, playing time may be shortened by mutual agreement of both coaches and the Referee. Anytime during the game, the playing time of any remaining period(s) may be shortened by mutual agreement of both coaches and the Referee.

*Article 4. Extended Periods*

A half may be extended by one (1) un-timed down when, during the last timed down, one of the following occurred:

- A. If there was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted.
- B. If there is a double foul.
- C. If there was an inadvertent whistle and the down is to be replayed.
- D. If a touchdown was scored, the try is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the second half and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.

*Article 5. Continuous Clock*

The clock will start when the ball strikes the kicker's foot on the first kick off of the game. The clock will run continuously for the first nineteen (19) minutes unless it is stopped for:

- A. Team time out (clock resumes on snap of the next play).
- B. Referee's time out (clock resumes on official's ready to play whistle).

*Article 6. One Minute Warning*

Approximately one (1) minute before the end of the first and second periods the Referee shall stop the clock and inform both coaches of the playing time remaining in that half. The clock starts on the next snap.

*Article 7. Last One (1) Minute*

During the final one (1) minute of the first and second periods the clock will stop for:

- A. Incomplete legal or incomplete illegal forward pass – starts on the snap
- B. Out-of-Bounds – starts on the snap
- C. Safety – starts on the snap
- D. Team time out – starts on the snap
- E. First Down – starts on the snap
- F. Touchdown – start on the snap after the try
- G. Penalty and Administration – starts on the snap
- H. Referee's time out – starts at his/her ready to play whistle
- I. Touchback – starts on the snap
- J. Team A is awarded a new series – starts on the snap
- K. Team B is awarded a new series – starts on the snap
- L. Either team is awarded a new series following a legal punt – starts on the snap
- M. Delay of Game – starts on the Referee's ready to play whistle
- N. Inadvertent Whistle – starts on the ready to play whistle

*Article 8. Timing Errors*

The Referee shall have the authority to correct obvious timing errors if discovery is prior to the second live ball following the error unless the period had officially ended.

*Article 9. Down Timing*

Team A shall have 30 seconds to initiate the snap from the Referee's ready to play whistle. *Penalty: Delay of Game – Three (3) Steps*

**Section 3. Tie Game / Overtime**

*Article 1. Mandatory Meeting*

If a playoff game ends in a tie score (regular season games do not have overtime) the officials must bring all players and coaches to the center of the field. They will discuss the tiebreaker procedures and answer all questions prior to the coin toss. After this meeting, the coaches will stay and the players will return to their respective sidelines.

### *Article 2. Coin Toss*

A coin will be tossed to determine the options as in the start of the game. Each overtime period begins with a coin toss. The Mandatory Meeting is only for the first overtime period. All overtime periods are played toward the same goal.

### *Article 3. Tie Breaker*

Unless moved by penalty, each team will start 1<sup>st</sup> and goal from the 1<sup>st</sup> down marker closest to the goal line. The object is to score a touchdown. An overtime period consists of a series of four (4) downs by each team. If the score is still tied after one period, play will proceed until a winner is determined. If the first team awarded the ball scores, the opponent must receive an opportunity to score. If the defense intercepts the pass or fumble and returns it for a touchdown, they win the game.

### *Article 4. Penalties*

The offense should be awarded a new series of four (4) downs when the penalty for defensive pass interference or roughing the passer is accepted. Dead ball fouls following a successful try will be penalized from the succeeding spot.

### *Article 5. Extra Point Try*

After the second overtime period, all Extra Point Tries must be two (2) point attempts.

## **Section 4. Time Outs**

### *Article 1. Allotted Time Outs*

Each team is awarded two (2) time outs per game half and do not carry over. One (1) per overtime period.

### *Article 2. Referee's Responsibility*

The Referee shall declare an official's time out for any contingency not covered elsewhere by the rules.

### *Article 3. Time Out Charge*

The Referee shall declare time out when he/she suspends play for any reason. Each time out shall be charged either to the Referee or one of the teams.

### *Article 4. Coach and Referee Conference*

When a team requests a charged time out for a misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule, the Referee will confer with the coach with all officials present. The officials will then confer separate of all other participants until a decision is made. The request must be made prior to the time the ball becomes alive following the play to be reviewed unless the period has officially ended. At the end of the half the team has until the first snap of the second half to protest.

### *Article 5. Injured Players*

An injured or apparently injured player, who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs. A player who is bleeding, has an open wound, or has blood on the uniform shall be considered injured. If the Referee discovers an injured player during a live ball, he/she may whistle the play dead immediately in the interest of player safety. The Referee has discretion.

## **Section 5. Delays**

### *Article 1. Delay of Game*

The ball must be put into play promptly and legally and any action or inaction by either team, which tends to prevent this, is a delay of game. The Referee shall declare an official's time out when a team is illegally conserving or consuming time. This includes:

- A. Failure to snap or free kick within thirty (30) seconds after the ball is ready for play
- B. Putting the ball in play before it is declared ready for play
- C. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead

*Penalty: Dead Ball Foul - Delay of Game – Three (3) Steps*

#### *Article 2. Unfair Tactics*

The Referee may order the game clock started or stopped whenever, in his/her opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume playing time by tactics obviously unfair. *Penalty: Delay of Game – Three (3) Steps*

### **RULE 5**

#### **Series of Downs, Number of Down, and Team Possession after Penalty**

##### *Article 1. Number of Downs*

Each team receives four (4) downs to pass the zone-line-to-gain or end zone.

##### *Article 2. Zone-Line-to-Gain*

The zone-line-to-gain in any series shall be the zone immediately in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such case, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone-line-to-gain. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.

##### *Article 3. Series of Downs*

A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty; or a penalty against the opponent moves the ball into the next zone; or an accepted penalty against the opponent involves an automatic first down; or either team has obtained legal possession of the ball as a result of a penalty, free kick, punt, touchback, pass interception, or failure to gain the zone in advance of the ball.

##### *Article 4. After Penalty*

If offsetting fouls occur during a down, that down shall be repeated.

EXCEPTION: If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul was not prior to the final change of possession and it declines all penalties for its opponent's fouls, other than unsportsmanlike conduct.

### **RULE 6**

#### **Kicking the Ball, Fair Catch, Touchback**

##### **Section 1. Protected Scrimmage Kick**

##### *Article 1. Referee's Responsibility*

Prior to making the ball ready for play on fourth down, the Referee must ask Team A's coach if he/she wants a protected kick (punt). The Referee must communicate this decision to Team B's coach and the other officials.

### *Article 2. Team A*

Team A must have all field players (typically six) except the kicker on the line of scrimmage. All players except the kicker must remain motionless until the ball is kicked. The kicker must be at least five (5) steps behind the scrimmage line when receiving the snap. After the snap, the kicker must kick the ball immediately and in a continuous motion. *Penalty: Illegal Procedure – Three (3) Steps*

Any kick caught behind the line of scrimmage by Team A can not be advanced.

### *Article 3. Team B*

All of Team B's players must be at least ten (10) yards behind the defensive line of scrimmage. Team B's players may not attempt to distract the kicker or attempt to block the kick. *Penalty: Illegal Procedure – Three (3) Steps*

## **Section 2. Fair Catch**

### *Article 1. Receiver*

Any member of Team B may signal for a fair catch while any kick is in flight and is beyond Team A's scrimmage line. If any receiver gives a valid signal for a fair catch and catches the kick beyond Team A's scrimmage line and between the goal lines, it is a fair catch and the ball becomes dead. After a valid fair catch signal by any member of Team B, no member of Team B may advance the ball.

### *Article 2. Signal*

Any player signaling fair catch must do so by extending one arm above his/her head and waiving laterally from side to side more than once.

## **Section 3. Touchback**

### *Article 1. Advancement*

Any kick legally received in the end zone, minus a fair catch signal, may be advanced beyond the end zone by the receiver.

All other rules governing running and receiving apply.

## **RULE 7**

### **Snapping, Handling, Passing, Running the Ball, Blocking**

## **Section 1. Prior to the Snap**

### *Article 1. Encroachment*

Following the ready for play and until the snap, no player on Team B may encroach, touch the ball, nor may any player contact opponents or in any way interfere with them. This includes standing in the neutral zone to give defensive signals, or shifting through the zone. After the snapper has placed his/her hand(s) on the ball, it is encroachment for any player on either team to enter the neutral zone, except for the snapper's right to be over the ball or straddling the line on a side snap. *Penalty: Encroachment – Three (3) Steps*

### *Article 2. Snapper*

The snapper, after assuming position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of play until it is snapped. An infraction of this provision may be penalized as illegal procedure, whether the ball is snapped or not. *Penalty: Illegal Procedure – Three (3) Steps*

Any penalty on Team B resulting from Team A's illegal procedure shall be cancelled.

## **Section 2. Position and Action During the Snap**

### *Article 1. Team A*

Four (4) players shall be on the scrimmage line at the initiation of play. Three (3) players shall be off the scrimmage line at the initiation of play (this includes the quarterback). All players off the scrimmage line may be in motion at the initiation of play. All players on the scrimmage line must be stationary for one (1) second prior to the initiation of play. All of Team A's players must be within fifteen (15) yards of the scrimmage line.

### *Article 2. Team B*

There are no guidelines affecting Team B concerning number of players on the scrimmage line or in motion.

### *Article 3. Team A Players in Motion*

No player in motion may contact the scrimmage line prior to the initiation of play. Any Team A player not on the scrimmage line may be in motion, but not in motion toward Team B's scrimmage line.

### *Article 4. Initiation of Play*

Any Team A player not on the scrimmage line may initiate play. The ball must contact a player not originally on the scrimmage line.

### *Article 5. Penalty*

The penalty for violation of any rule in Section 2 is: *Illegal Procedure – Three (3) Steps*

## **Section 3. Passing and Receiving**

### *Article 1. Diving*

There is no diving while running the ball. A receiver may dive to catch a ball as long as the motion does not draw contact from a defender. A defensive player may not dive to remove a flag. A defensive player may dive to catch an interception provided the motion does not draw contact from a receiver. *Penalty: Illegal Procedure – Three (3) Steps*

### *Article 2. Runner's Backward Pass*

A runner may pass the ball backward or loose player possession by a fumble at anytime except if intentionally thrown out-of-bounds to conserve time or to avoid being deflagged/tagged. *Penalty: illegal Procedure – Three (3) Steps from Previous Spot*

### *Article 3. Fumble or Backward Pass*

A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead at the spot where it touches the ground and possession belongs to the team in last possession before contacting the ground.

A fumble or backward pass behind the goal line is a touchback or safety. If out-of-bounds between the goal lines is dead at the spot where it touches the ground or crosses the sideline whichever comes first.

### *Article 4. End Zone Fumble*

If Team A's player fumbles the ball prior to reaching the end zone and the ball lands in the end zone, Team A shall retain possession at the spot where control was lost and subsequently loose that down.

### *Article 5. End Zone Interception*

If Team B intercepts a pass inside the end zone, the play is dead. Team B retains possession 1<sup>st</sup> down from the succeeding 1<sup>st</sup> down line.

### *Article 6. Eligibility*

All players on the field of play are eligible to catch a pass. *See Article 7 below.*

### *Article 7. Illegal Forward Pass*

A forward pass is illegal:

- A. If the passer's foot travels beyond Team A's scrimmage line
- B. If thrown after team possession has changed during the down
- C. If intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to save loss of yardage
- D. If a passer catches his/her untouched forward pass
- E. If there is more than one forward pass per down

*Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass – Three (3) Steps from Spot of Pass and Loss of Down for initial Team A. If after team change of possession: Dead Ball Spot Foul plus Three (3) Steps*

### *Article 8. Inbounds or Out-of-Bounds*

If a player attempts a catch or interception while in the air, the player must contact the ground in-bounds with the ball in his/her possession prior to touching out-of-bounds, unless an opponent's contact causes him/her to first touch out-of-bounds. The following guides:

- A. If one foot first lands in-bounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch or interception although a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out-of-bounds.
- B. A loss of ball simultaneously with returning to the ground is not a catch or interception.

### *Article 9. Tipping*

A player may, while jumping in the air to attempt a catch, pass (tip) the ball in any direction provided he/she has not yet contacted the ground.

### *Article 10. Interference*

Contact that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the scrimmage line is pass interference unless it occurs when two (2) or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged/tagged prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the scrimmage line.

- A. Offensive Pass Interference – After the ball is snapped, and until it is touched, there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond the scrimmage line.  
*Penalty: Offensive Pass Interference – Five (5) Steps, Loss of Down*
- B. Defensive Pass Interference – After the ball is snapped, and until it is touched, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond the scrimmage line.  
*Penalty: Defensive Pass Interference – Five (5) Steps, Automatic 1<sup>st</sup> Down*

### *Article 11. Roughing the Passer*

Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into the passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown, also there should be no attempts to hit the passer's arm during a throwing motion.

*Penalty: Roughing the Passer – Five (5) Steps, Automatic 1<sup>st</sup> Down*

## Section 4. Running and Flag Removal

### Article 1. Flag Removal

When the flag is clearly taken from the runner in possession of the ball, the down shall end and the ball is declared dead. A player who removes the belt from the runner should immediately hold the flag above his/her head to assist the officials in locating the spot where the capture occurred.

- A. Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged
- B. When a runner loses his/her flag either accidentally, inadvertently (not removed by grabbing or pulling), or on purpose the ball is dead at that spot. *Exception: Rule 8, Section 3, Article 3*
- C. A defensive player intentionally pulling a flag from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. The Referee shall warn the team. Any further penalty will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.
- D. Tampering with the flag(s) or belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal.
- E. No player may leave his/her feet while attempting to remove the flag.

### Article 2. Contact

In an attempt to remove the flag from a runner, defensive players may not purposefully contact the offensive player. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag.

*Penalty: Defensive Use of Hands – Three (3) Steps*

### Article 3. Flag Guarding

A runner shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag. A player may not spin while running the ball.

*Penalty: Guarding – Three (3)*

### Article 4. Face Guarding

A defensive player may not use their arms and hands to intentionally obstruct the receiver's view of the ball.

*Penalty: Guarding – Three (3) Steps, Automatic 1<sup>st</sup> Down*

### Article 5. Stiff Arm

A runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with an extended hand or arm which includes the use of a "stiff arm" to flag guard.

*Penalty: Guarding – Three (3) Steps*

### Article 6. Helping the Runner

A player shall not grasp, pull, push, or aid any teammate runner.

*Penalty: Helping the Runner – Three (3) Steps*

## Section 5. Blocking

### Article 1. Offensive Blocking

The offensive blocking shall take place without contact. The blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind the back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs or body to initiate contact during an offensive block is illegal.

*Penalty: Personal Foul – Three (3) Steps*

### Article 2. Interlock Blocking

Teammates of a runner or passer may interfere for him/her by blocking, but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner.

*Penalty: Illegal Procedure – Three (3) Steps*

*Article 3. Defensive Rush and Use of Hands*

Defensive players must attempt to go around the offensive blocker; defensive players must not use any part of his/her arms, hands, elbows or any part of the body to contact the offensive player.

*Penalty: Personal Foul – Three (3) Steps*

*Article 4. Establishing Position*

The concept of establishing position shall dictate the administering of the above Personal Fouls while blocking. The blocker must have first established a stationary position prior to initiating the block. If a defensive player gains advantage by movement to avoid the block, the offensive player must not move in such a way as to draw contact. The player that draws contact is the player that receives the penalty for Personal Foul.

## **RULE 8**

### **Scoring Plays and Touchbacks**

#### **Section 3. Touchdown**

*Article 1. Touchdown*

A touchdown shall be scored when a legal forward pass is complete or a fumble or backward pass is caught behind the opponent's goal line or when a player is legally in possession of the ball and penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line.

*Article 2. Points*

A touchdown is six (6) points

*Article 3. Flag Removal Prior to*

On a play by Team A where a touchdown is imminent or no other Team B player has a reasonable expectation of flag removal prior to a touchdown, and a Team B player commits any illegal flag removal foul on the runner in possession of the ball or the intended receiver then Team A will be awarded a touchdown. If the touchdown is not imminent or one or more Team B players has a reasonable expectation of flag removal prior to the touchdown and a Team B player has committed an illegal flag removal foul then *Rule 7, Section 4* governs.

#### **Section 4. Extra Point Try**

*Article 1. One (1) Point Try*

Team A may obtain one (1) point by running the ball across the goal line during an Extra Point Try.

*Article 2. Two (2) Point Try*

Team A may obtain two (2) points by passing the ball across the goal line during an Extra Point Try.

*Article 3. Determining Factor*

If one forward pass is completed at any point during the Extra Point Try, two (2) points shall be awarded upon successful completion of the Try.

*Article 4. Number of Downs*

While the game clock is stopped, there shall be one (1) down awarded from the Extra Point Try Line established under Rule 1, unless changed by penalty.

*Article 5. Penalties During*

If a double foul occurs during the Extra Point Try, the Try will be retried. When a distance penalty is incurred by the offense during a successful try, the down will be repeated, if accepted. However, if the penalty carries a loss of down, the try has ended and shall not be retried.

*Article 6. Neutral Zone*

During Extra Point Try downs, Team B's scrimmage line is one (1) football length from Team A's, including during penalty yardage situations.

*Article 7. Team B Intercepts*

If a player on Team B intercepts an Extra Point Try, the play is immediately dead and the Try has ended.

**RULE 9**

**Conduct of Players and Others Subject to the Rules**

**Section 1. Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

*Article 1. Non-Contact Acts*

No player shall commit non-contact acts during a period or intermission. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A. Any acts of unfair play
- B. Using disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with the offense's signals or movements
- C. Intentionally kicking at any opposing player
- D. Intentionally swinging an arm, hand or fist at any opposing player

*Article 2. Dead Ball Player Fouls*

The following are dead ball player fouls:

- A. Intentionally kicking the ball
- B. Spiking the ball into the ground
- C. Throwing the ball high into the air
- D. Aggressively throwing the ball towards any official or opposing player

*Article 3. Prohibited Acts*

There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, coaches or others subject to the Rules. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A. Attempting to influence a decision by an official
- B. Disrespectfully addressing or taunting an official
- C. Indicating overt objections to an official's decisions
- D. Holding an unauthorized conference, or being on the field illegally
- E. Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gesture
- F. Intentionally contacting a game official physically during the game by any person subject to the Rules.

*Article 4. Flagrant Personal Fouls*

No player shall commit a personal foul during a period or intermission. Any act prohibited hereunder or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. No player shall:

- A. Punch, strike, strip, steal or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession
- B. Trip an opponent
- C. Contact an opponent who is on the ground
- D. Throw the runner to the ground
- E. Hurdle any other player
- F. Deliberately contact any opponent during a dead ball
- G. Make any contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary of any nature including using fists, locked hands, elbows or any part of the forearm or hand, except according to the Rules
- H. Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player
- I. Clip an opponent
- J. Tackling the runner

*Article 5. Penalty*

The penalty for any violation of Rule 9, Section 1 is:

- A. First Offense – *Ten (1) Steps ,Verbal Warning*
- B. Second Offense – *Immediate Ejection from Play*

## **RULE 10**

### **Enforcement of Penalties**

*Article 1. Coach's Choice*

When a foul occurs during a live ball, the Referee shall, at the end of the down, notify both coaches. The Referee shall inform the coach of the offended team regarding the rights of penalty acceptance or declination and shall indicate to him/her the number of the ensuing down, distance to be gained, and status of the ball for each available choice. The distance penalty for any foul may be declined. If the penalty is declined or if there is a double foul, there is no loss of distance. A coach's choice of options may not be revoked.

*Article 2. Live Ball Fouls*

Any live ball foul is penalized according to the all-but-one principle, except:

- A. A foul that occurs simultaneously with the snap or free kick is penalized from the previous spot
- B. A non-player foul, unsportsmanlike foul, or dead ball foul is penalized from the succeeding spot

*Article 3. Dead Ball Fouls*

When a foul occurs during a dead ball either between downs or before a snap or free kick, the officials shall not permit the ball to become live.

*Article 4. Establish Zone-Line-to-Gain*

On a live ball foul mark off the penalty steps first, then establish the zone-line-to-gain. However, with a dead ball foul, establish the zone-line-to-gain first, and then mark off the penalty steps.

*Article 5. All-But-One Principle*

Enforcement philosophy is based on the fact that a team is given the advantage of the distance that is gained without assistance of a foul. It is assumed that the only foul that would give this aid is a foul by the offense behind the basic spot. Therefore, all fouls but this one, that is a foul by the offense behind the basic spot, are penalized from the basic spot. This one foul is penalized from the spot of the foul.

*Article 6. Loose Ball Play*

If a foul occurs during a loose ball play, the basic enforcement spot is the previous spot either the spot of the snap or the free kick.

*Article 7. Running Play*

If a foul occurs during a running play, the basic enforcement spot is the spot where the related run ends.

*Article 8. Half the Distance*

A measurement can not take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line. If the penalty is greater than half the distance, the penalty is half the distance to the goal line.

*Article 9. Safety / Goal Line*

If the offensive team throws an illegal forward pass from its end zone or commits any other foul for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from or behind its goal line which is now the basic spot, it is a safety. For a defensive team foul, if the enforcement spot that is now the basic spot is on or behind the offended team's goal line any measurement is from the goal line.

*Article 10. Foul on a Score*

If there is a player foul by the offensive team other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer, during a down which results in a successful touchdown or try, the acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score. If there is a player foul by the defensive team, other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer, during a down which results in a successful touchdown or try, the penalty is automatically declined.

*Article 11. Foul Prior to a Try*

When a foul occurs after a touchdown and before the ball is ready for play for the try, the enforcement is at the succeeding spot where the ball will be next snapped for the try.

*Article 12. Double Foul*

It is a double foul if both teams commit fouls, other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer, during the same live ball period in which:

- A. There is no change of possession
- B. There is a change of possession, and the team in possession at the end of the down fouls prior to the final change of possession
- C. There is a change of possession and the team in final possession accepts the penalty for its opponent's foul

In all three the penalties cancel and the down is replayed. EXCEPTION: If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul is not prior to the final change of possession and it declined the penalty for its opponent's foul(s), other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer.

*Article 13. Multiple Live Ball Fouls*

When two (2) or more live ball fouls are committed by the same team, only one (1) penalty may be chosen except when a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct or nonplayer fouls are administered from the succeeding spot as dead ball foul.

*Article 14. Multiple Dead Ball Fouls*

Penalties for dead ball fouls are administered separately and in the order of occurrence. Dead ball fouls are not coupled with live ball fouls or other dead ball fouls to create double or multiple fouls. Penalize all unsportsmanlike and nonplayer fouls separately.

*Article 15. Summary of Fouls and Penalties*

All Fouls are penalized THREE (3) STEPS except:

- A. Offensive Pass Interference – Five (5) Steps
- B. Defensive Pass Interference – Five (5) Steps
- C. Roughing the Passer – Five (5) Steps
- D. Unsportsmanlike Conduct
  - First Offense – Ten (10) Steps
  - Second Offense – Immediate Ejection from Play

## **Any Rule not Addressed Here Defaults to Official NIRSA Rules**

*Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.*

*1 Corinthians 9:25*

*Rules edited and compiled by:  
Pray then Play Sports Executive Committee*

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