

Flag Football Rules

Intramural Sports

Recreation and Wellness Services

University of Akron

Participation in any and all activities within this facility and/or sponsored by The University of Akron is voluntary. All participants understand and agree that use of this facility and/or participation in an activity sponsored by the university is at their own risk and that the university is not responsible for any incidents, injuries or loss of property that may occur.

Flag Football rules will be conducted under the NIRSA laws of the game with the following additions, exceptions, and clarifications. If you would like to review or borrow a copy of the NIRSA Flag Football Rulebook, or have any questions, please contact the Manager of Intramural Sports.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- All students, faculty or staff can participate provided they meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the Intramural Sports Participants Handbook. All participants must present a valid U of A ID.
- Each team should start the game with 7 players; a minimum of 5 is needed to avoid a forfeit.
- A player may play on only one team per sport.
- Each team shall designate to the Referee a player as the field captain. This person is the only player who can communicate with the officials. The captain's first choice of any penalty option shall be irrevocable. The captain is responsible for any information contained in the Intramural Flag Football Rules, Intramural Sport Participants Handbook, and Sportsmanship Policy.

LENGTH OF GAME:

- Playing time shall be 40 minutes, separated into two halves of 20 minutes.
- Half-time shall be 3 minutes.
- There will be a running clock for the entire first half, and the first 18 minutes of the second half. The last 2 minutes of the second half will follow NIRSA timing rules (similar to NCAA Football).
- A coin toss will determine who shall receive the choice of possession or side at the beginning of the game.
- If only one team is ready to play at game time, they will automatically have the choice.

EQUIPMENT

- **The Ball** - The official ball shall be leather or rubber covered and shall meet the recommendations of size and shape for a regulation football. There are no requirements regarding ball pressure and markings. Men shall use the regular size ball while women shall use the intermediate size ball.
- **Flag Belt** - Each player must wear a one piece belt that is free of any knots clipped at the waist line with three flags permanently attached, one flag on each side and one at the center of the back. Flags shall be of contrasting color to team jerseys and also their opponent's flags. Flags will be provided to each team on site. Shirts must be tucked in and flag belts must be worn on the outside of all clothing!
- **Team Jerseys** - Teams shall wear shirts that are of the same color. Team jerseys must contrast with the jerseys of the opposing team. If teams are wearing the same color jersey, the official shall flip a coin to determine who will change. Jerseys may not be tied in a manner that creates any type of knot. **Arm openings must be less than 4 inches below the armpit.**
- **Shoes** - Players must wear shoes, either soft soled soccer/football cleats, tennis, or Astroturf shoes. No sandals, boots, or metal/sharp plastic cleats will be allowed. No screw in or detachable cleats will be allowed.
- **Supports, Braces, Gloves, and Pads** - No casts/splints will be allowed under any circumstances. No pads or braces will be allowed above the waist. Players who wear a knee brace with exposed metal or metal hinges are required to cover it with at least ½ inch of closed cell slow recovery rubber or other material of the same minimum thickness and physical properties. Players may also wear gloves, which consist of a soft, pliable non-abrasive material. Kneepads of a soft pliable nature will be allowed below the waist. Any player wearing illegal or dangerous equipment shall not be permitted to play. All equipment shall be subject to the approval of the SRWC-IM staff and their decisions shall be final.
- **Headwear** - Players may wear a one-piece elastic headband made of a soft pliable material. They may also wear knit stocking caps in cold weather. Rubber or elastic cloth bands may be used to control hair. No other headwear will be allowed. No baseball caps, bandannas (including "Do-rags") or helmets.
- **Jewelry** - Jewelry or hard hair control devices will not be allowed. This includes but is not limited to necklaces, earrings, newly pierced earrings, facial piercing, rings, bracelets & watches. Individuals will not be allowed to tape over any jewelry item. If you cannot remove the item you cannot play.
- **Pockets, Hoods, Towels** - Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt must remain tucked in. Pants or shorts with any belt(s), belt loop(s), pockets(s), or exposed drawstring(s) are not permitted. You will NOT be allowed to participate in our game if your shorts or pants have any pockets! Towels attached at the player's waist are not permitted.
- **Playbooks**- Playbooks may be carried onto the field as long it is kept inside their clothing rather than thrown on the ground. **If a lanyard or any other material is used to fasten it, it must be held together by a break-away mechanism.**

MERCY RULE:

- If a team is **19 points** or more ahead (**25 points in Co-ed**) when the Referee announces the two-minute warning for the second half, the game shall be over.
- If a team scores during the last two minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of **19 or more points (25 points in Coed)**, the game shall end at that point.

OVERTIME (TIE GAME):

- Each overtime period begins with a coin toss.
- Winner has the choice of: either 1st or 2nd series (offense or defense).
- Loser has choice of: goal (both teams will use the same goal).
- Each team is given 4 plays to score from the 10-yard line; if they score the extra point is attempted. An interception ends the series.
- During regular season play, after two overtimes, the game will be considered a tie.
- During play-offs, overtimes will continue until a winner is declared.

FREE KICK:

- There will be no free kicks, only punting. Unless moved by penalty, the ball shall be snapped on the 14 yard line to start each half, or following a safety, touchback, or extra point attempt.

PUNTING:

- Punts must be announced, there are **NO FAKE OR QUICK PUNTS. Penalty- Illegal Kick, 10 yards**
- All players, except the punter, must be on the line and no movement on the line is allowed until after the ball is punted. **Penalty- Dead Ball foul, False Start, 5 yards**
- There are no signals, fair catch or otherwise, during kicks.
- Once the ball is touched (muffed) the ball is dead.
- If the punt goes out of bounds, the ball is taken at the spot where the ball goes out of bounds.
- If the ball hits the ground on the snap, it is dead and the other team gains control at that spot.
- The only way the Offense can change their decision is to call a time-out, or if a foul occurs anytime prior to or during the down and the down is to be replayed. In the later case the Offensive team will be asked if they want a protected scrimmage kick or not.
- Once the ball is punted, any player on the receiving team may block the kick provided they stay on their side of the line of scrimmage.
- There are no restrictions to the number of players the defensive team must have on the line. Defensive players **MAY** attempt to block the punt by jumping straight up in the air. They may not, however, penetrate the line of scrimmage. **Penalty - Dead Ball foul, Encroachment, 5 yards from succeeding spot.**

LINE OF SCRIMMAGE:

- The offensive team must have a minimum of 4 players (5 in Co-ed) on the line of scrimmage at the snap. **Penalty- Illegal Formation, 5 yards**
- Each player on the offensive team must be within 15 yards of the ball prior to the snap. **Penalty- Illegal Procedure, 5 yards**
- Players in motion do not count as players on the line of scrimmage.
- Once the center has placed his hands on the ball no offensive player may enter the neutral zone. **Penalty- Dead Ball foul, False Start, 5 yards**
- Following the ready for play whistle and until a legal snap, no defensive player may encroach, touch the ball, stand in, or in any other way interfere with the offensive team. **Penalty - Dead Ball foul, Encroachment, 5 yards from succeeding spot.**

BACKWARD PASSES AND FUMBLES:

- Any ball that is fumbled during a down will be dead by rule once it has touched the ground.
- A backward pass or fumble may be caught or intercepted by any player inbounds and advanced.
- A player may not intentionally throw a backward pass out of bounds to conserve time or to avoid being downed. **Penalty- Illegal pass, 5 yards, loss of down and the clock will start on the ready for play.**
- Once a ball has touched the ground the ball is considered dead.

FORWARD PASSES AND INTERCEPTIONS:

- If a player is in the air attempting to catch a ball, the player must contact the ground with at least one foot in-bounds with the ball in their possession prior to going out of bounds, unless contact by an opponent causes the player to first touch out-of -bounds.
- If possession of the ball is lost simultaneously when they hit the ground, it is not a catch.
- If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the team that snapped the ball.

PASS INTERFERENCE:

- Any contact that, in the view of the official, interferes with the attempt to catch a pass (offensive or defensive player) is pass interference unless, in the view of the official, it occurs when two or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. **Penalty- Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot, automatic first down. Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot, loss of down.**

- Hindering an opponent's vision without making an attempt to catch, intercept, or bat the ball is pass interference, even though no contact was made.
- It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged or touched prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the offense's line of scrimmage.
- If the pass interference by the defense is intentional and/or unsportsmanlike, the defense may be penalized an additional 10 yards.

SCORING:

- To be ruled a touchdown; the ball must be on or over the goal line.
- The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can deflag the player. If the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown will be disallowed. **Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, player automatically disqualified from the game, 10 yards from the previous spot.**
- A team, which intercepts a pass in its own end zone, may advance the ball out of the end zone. It is a touchback if the interceptor is deflagged before leaving his/her end zone.
- Touchdowns = 6 points
- Extra Points = 1 point if successful from the 3-yard line
- Extra Points = 2 points if successful from the 10-yard line
- Extra Points = 3 points if successful from the 20-yard line
- Safety = 2 points
- Defensive Conversion on Extra Point Attempt = 3 points
- Once a team has made their choice on the extra point, they can only change their decision by taking a time-out.

SAFETY:

- If a player carries the ball across the goal line they are defending and the ball becomes dead while in their team's possession, it is a safety.
- If a team commits a foul in the end zone where the spot of enforcement is designated as the spot of the foul, it will be declared a safety.
- A team recording a safety will receive two points, and the scoring team then starts with the ball on their own 14-yard line.
- Exception- Momentum Rule - When a player intercepts a forward pass or catches a scrimmage kick between their five yard line and their goal line and their momentum carries them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead, the ball will belong to the receiving team at the spot of the catch or reception.

PERSONAL FOULS/UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT PENALTY: Any act listed below or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul and is a 10 yard penalty. Any personal foul/unsportsmanlike conduct penalty can be deemed flagrant, warranting an automatic ejection. Players shall not:

- Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
- Trip an opponent.
- Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
- Throw the runner to the ground.
- Hurdle another player.
- Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
- Make any contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary.
- Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
- Clip an opponent.
- Position themselves on the shoulders of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.
- Tackle the runner.
- Fighting an opponent.

SCREEN BLOCKING: Legally obstructing an opponent without using any part of the body to initiate contact. Screen blocking shall take place without contact. The blocker shall have their hands and arms at their sides or behind their back. A screen blocker cannot use their hands, arms, elbows, legs or body to initiate contact. **Penalty- Illegal Contact, 10 yards.** Screen blockers may not:

- Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
- Make contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
- Take a position so close to an opponent that they cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction.

STIFF ARMING: Stiff arming is not allowed; **Penalty- Personal Foul/Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards**, and if warranted flagrant, and ejection will result.

OBSTRUCTING THE RUNNER: A defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of the runner when attempting to remove the flag belt. **Penalty- Personal Foul/Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards.**

THE FLAG BELT:

- All shirts must be tucked in, and are not permitted to hang over the flag belt.
- Should a player loose their flag belt legally or illegally during a down and should that player gain possession of a live ball, that player will be considered down when a legal tag (one hand touched by the defense between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm) is made.
- When a player scores they must immediately raise their hands and allow an official to remove their flag belt. This is done to insure that the flag belt has not been illegally secured. If the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown will be disallowed **Penalty-Personal**

Foul/Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards from the previous spot, player automatically disqualified from the game.

- Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged. It is illegal for a defensive player to intentionally pull a flag from an offensive player who is not in possession of the ball. In cases where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty of the play. **Penalty- Personal foul/Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards**

GUARDING THE FLAG BELT: Runners shall not flag guard by using any part of the body or ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. **Penalty, Flag Guarding, 10 yards.** Flag guarding includes but is not limited to:

- Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that flag guards.

OFFICIAL'S AUTHORITY: An official assumes authority 15 minutes prior to the scheduled game time, and until they have left the field. The officials have the authority to rule on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. His/her decision is final, unless ruled otherwise by the supervisor on duty or the Intramural Sports Manager. The official has the right to eject players or have them sit out of part or all of the game. Fans, coaches, and spectators are a part of a team and any fouls they commit will go against their team.

Co-Rec Modifications:

PLAYERS: A game is played between two teams of 8 players, 4 men and 4 women. Teams with 7 players shall be 4 men and 3 women or 3 men and 4 women. To avoid a forfeit, six players, 3 men and 3 women, 2 men and 4 women, or 4 men and 2 women are required.

THE BALL: A regular size football shall be used.

LINE OF SCRIMMAGE: The offensive team must have at least 5 players on their scrimmage line. **Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.**

MALE RUNNER: The offensive team males cannot advance the ball through their scrimmage line. **Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.** There are no restrictions: during a run by a male runner once the ball is beyond the offensive scrimmage line; during a run by a female runner, and after a change of possession.

OPEN vs. CLOSED PLAYS:

- Each drive will begin with the play being open.

- During the offensive team's possession there may not be two (2) consecutive legal forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. This rule applies to the Try. **Penalty- Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards, Loss of Down.**
- If a male passer completes a legal forward pass to a male receiver, the next legal forward pass completion **MUST** involve either a female passer or a female receiver for positive yards. (i.e. All plays are OPEN until a forward pass is completed from a male QB to a male receiver. After a male-to-male completion, the next play shall be CLOSED, and will remain closed until positive yards are gained on a passing play that involves either a female QB or a female receiver).
- There are no other restrictions concerning a male passer completing legal forward passes to a female receiver, or female to female, or female to male.
- Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completing is "open" or "closed."
- If an official erroneously indicates the "open/closed" status of a down, the play is nullified and the down will be repeated.

SCORING: If a female player scores a touchdown, the point value is 9. If a female player throws a legal forward pass and a touchdown is scored by any offensive team member, the point value is 9.

All final decisions to eligibility rules will be at the discretion of the Manager of Intramural Sports.

Any further questions can be directed to the Manager of Intramural Sports at 972-7443.

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