

**I.F.A.F.**

INTERNATIONAL  
FEDERATION  
FOR  
AMERICAN FOOTBALL

**FLAG FOOTBALL RULE BOOK**

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## **FLAG FOOTBALL**

### **The Flag Football Code**

**Only the highest standards of sportsmanship and conduct are expected of players, coaches and others associated with the game. There is no tolerance for unfair tactics, unsportsmanlike conduct or maneuvers deliberately designed to inflict injury.**

**The Code of Ethics states:**

- a. The Flag Football Code shall be an integral part of this code of ethics and should be carefully read and observed.**
- b. To gain an advantage by circumvention or disregard for the rules brands a coach or player as unfit to be associated with flag football.**

**Rules alone cannot accomplish fair play. Only the continued best efforts by coaches, players, officials and all friends of the game can preserve the high ethical standards set by the game of football. Therefore, as a guide to players, coaches, officials and others responsible for the welfare of the game, the committee publishes this following code:**

### **COACHING ETHICS**

**Deliberately teaching players to violate the rules is indefensible. The coaching of intentional holding, feigning injury, interference or intentional roughing will break down rather than aid in the building of character of players. Such instruction is not only unfair to one's opponent but is demoralizing to the players entrusted to a coach's care and has no place in the game. The following are unethical practices:**

- a. Changing numbers during the game to deceive the opponent.**
- b. Using non therapeutic drugs in the game of football. This is not in keeping with the aims and purposes of amateur athletics and is prohibited.**
- c. Shifting in a way that simulates the start of a play or employing any other unfair tactic for the purpose of drawing one's opponent offside. This can be construed only as a deliberate attempt to gain an unmerited advantage.**
- d. Feigning an injury for the purpose of gaining additional, undeserved time for one's team. An injured player must be given full protection under the rules, but feigning injury is dishonest, unsportsmanlike and contrary to the spirit of the rules. Such tactics cannot be tolerated among sportsmen of integrity.**
- e. Kicking oversized slick footballs to your opponents with the sole purpose of making it difficult to handle properly.**

### **TALKING TO AN OPPONENT**

**Talking to an opponent in any manner that is demeaning, vulgar, abusive or "trashy" or intended to incite a physical response or verbally put**

**an opponent down is illegal. Coaches are urged to discuss this conduct frequently and support all officials' actions to control it.**

### **TALKING TO OFFICIALS**

**When an official imposes a penalty or makes a decision, he/she simply is doing their duty as they see it. They are on the field to uphold the integrity of the game of flag football, and their decisions are final and conclusive and should be accepted by players and coaches. For a coach to address, or permit anyone on the bench to address, uncomplimentary remarks to any official during the progress of a game, or to indulge in conduct that might incite players and spectators against the officials, is a violation of the rules of the game and must likewise be considered conduct unworthy of a member of the coaching profession.**

### **HOLDING**

**Illegal use of the hand or arm is unfair play, eliminates skill and does not belong in the game. All coaches and players should thoroughly understand the rules of proper offensive and defensive use of hands. Holding is a frequently called penalty. It is important to emphasize the severity of the penalty.**

### **SPORTSMANSHIP**

**The football player who intentionally violates a rule is guilty of unfair play and unsportsmanlike conduct; and whether they escape being penalized, they bring discredit to the good name of the game, which is their duty as a player to uphold.**

## **Rules Summary**

Flag Football is played with seven on-field players per team. The team that has possession of the ball is termed the offense and the team that doesn't is called the defense. The offense has four downs to obtain 20 yards (15 yards in women's games), keep possession of the ball and attempt to score. If they fail to gain the 20 yards and a first down, the ball goes to the defense and they, in turn, become the offense and have four downs to obtain 20 yards, keep the possession of the ball and attempt to score.

To begin a game, a team will kick off from their own 35 yard line or, if it is a non regulation field, 15 yards back from the center line, all measurements can be in yards or meters. The kicking team is determined by a coin toss conducted prior to the game. The winner of the coin toss can elect to have the first half or the second half choice of options. The options are to receive the kick off, to kick off, or to defend an end of the field or to defer. The other team has a similar choice at the beginning of the other half.

To begin the series of four downs, the ball is placed on the ground at the point the ball carrier was flagged on the kick off. This marks the line of scrimmage. All offensive players must take a position behind the line of scrimmage, with at least two receivers on each side of the center when the ball is set. All defensive players must take a position at least one yard from the line of scrimmage on the opposite side. A player designated as the center will then begin the play by snapping the ball between the legs to the quarterback who must receive the ball at least five yards behind the line of scrimmage. All players on the offense, except the center, are allowed to be in motion prior to the snap as long as only one player is in motion at any time, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line. Other players must be stationary in their positions without movement of the feet, body, head or arms. These receivers are not permitted to cross the line of scrimmage until after the snap. The game is mainly a passing game with all players on the offense being eligible receivers. There is no blocking permitted. The play is terminated when a defender flags the ball carrier.

During scrimmage plays the defense will have one player, called the rusher, pursue the quarterback after the ball is snapped. The rusher has specific rules which govern this position. They include being at least five yards away from the line of scrimmage at the time the ball is snapped and not lining up directly in front of the opposing center. In turn, the rules grant the rusher a direct and unobstructed path to the quarterback after the ball is snapped. No one is permitted to block or obstruct the rusher in any way. Teams may use more than one rusher on a play. All rushers have the right to a clear and direct path to the quarterback provided they adhere to the rusher rules stated above. The first player on the defense, to cross the line of scrimmage must have started from a point five yards from the line of scrimmage.

Bean bags are used by the officials to mark the line of scrimmage, the rusher's starting point and the first down line. Officials will place these bags at the appropriate spot prior to the start of each play. A different colored bag must be used to designate the first down mark.

Teams are permitted only one forward pass on each scrimmage play. There are no forward passes permitted on kick offs or after punts. Teams may lateral the ball among teammates as many times as they wish during a play. A lateral is a pass in which the ball travels parallel to or, in the direction of, the passer's dead ball line. An attempted lateral that results in the ball going forward to a teammate is illegal and is ruled an offside pass when caught by a teammate.

There are no fumbles in flag football. The ball is considered dead when it hits the ground during a scrimmage play, except on the initial center – quarterback exchange.

## **Scoring**

Points are awarded for touchdowns, converts and safety touches.

A touchdown is scored when a team gets the ball into the opponent's end zone by running with the ball across the goal line or by gaining possession of the ball in the end zone through a completed pass from a teammate. Touchdowns count for six points. After a touchdown, the scoring team has the choice of attempting a one point convert from the five yard line or a two point convert from the ten yard line. All converts must be passing or running plays. Kicking is not permitted on convert attempts.

A safety touch counts for two points and is awarded to a team a) when their opponents cause the ball to go into their own end zone and the play is ruled dead prior to the ball being brought out of the end zone, b) an accepted penalty for a foul leaves the ball on or behind the offending team's goal line.

## **Game Procedures**

A game is usually divided into four quarters of fifteen minutes each. The clock runs continuously during the quarters except for time outs and special timing provisions in the last two minutes of the second and fourth quarters. During the last two minutes of these quarters, the clock will be stopped during certain circumstances which are described in the rules. At the end of the first and third quarters, teams change ends and downs and yardage continue. At the end of the second quarter there is a rest period of an agreed upon length and the third quarter begins with a kick off. Each team has two 60 second time outs per half which, if not used, cannot be carried over to the next half. In addition there will be one 30 second time out at each two minute warning. Officials may call time outs to deal with measurements, rule explanations, or injuries. A team must have a minimum of seven players in team sweaters, with their flag belt and flags on the field, at the designated starting time, to begin a game or it will forfeit the game.

## **Punts**

Teams may punt the ball on any play and in doing so they give up possession of the ball to the receiving team. When a ball is punted, members of the punting team must be at least two yards from the ball when it is first touched by a member of the receiving team. Failure to do so will result in a ten yard "no yards" penalty. If the ball touches the punt receiver then goes forward or backwards and hits the ground, the play will be whistled dead. If a punt is blocked by the defensive team, the play is dead when the ball hits the ground or is caught by a member of the kicking team and the non-kicking team takes possession at the point the ball was blocked.

## **General Information**

Participants in the game of Flag Football must consider the safety of all players in the game. Aggressive play must be tempered with control in order to avoid unnecessary bodily contact and the potential of injury to opponents. Players who show no regard for this concept will be penalized for the unnecessary contact they cause. Sportsmanship and consideration for the well being of others is an integral part of the game of Flag Football.

The rules of Flag Football exist to ensure that no team creates an unfair advantage over the other team. Therefore, infractions such as interference, tripping, unnecessary roughness, contacting the passer or punter, obstruction, offside and objectionable conduct will be called by the officials when committed by players during a game. It is imperative that all participants display sportsmanship during a game. Persistent arguing, obscene language, threats to players, officials, or spectators bring disgrace to the sport and will not be tolerated.

All measurements in this rule book can be applied in yards or in meters. All references will be made in the masculine, and are also true in the feminine form.

### **Rule 1 – The Kick Off**

- 1.1. To begin a game, a team will kick off from their own 35 yard line or, if it is a non-regulation field, 15 yards back from the center line. When the official blows the whistle to signal the kick off, the kicking team has 25 seconds to kick the ball or be penalized 10 yards for delay of game. This procedure is also used following a touchdown if the non-scoring team elects to receive the kick off.
- 1.2. The ball is normally kicked off from a tee, which cannot raise the lowest part of the ball more than two inches off the ground. If a tee is not used, the ball can be held on the ground by a member of the kicking team. The ball must be placed between the hash marks or inbound lines (20 yards in from the sidelines).
- 1.3. On a kick off all players of the receiving team must be at least 20 yards from the kick off line at the time the ball is kicked. Members of the kicking team must stay behind the kick off line until the ball is kicked. Failure to do so will result in a five yard illegal procedure penalty.
- 1.4. To be a legal kick off the ball must travel 20 yards towards the receiving team's dead ball line before it is touched by a member of the kicking team. It is an illegal procedure penalty if the ball is touched by a member of the kicking team prior to traveling 20 yards downfield or if it does not travel the 20 yards downfield, unless it is touched first by a member of the receiving team.
- 1.5. Members of the kicking team can touch the ball, or down it, after it travels 20 yards and before it is touched by a member of the receiving team. The kicking team does not have to "give yards" on a kick off. The kicking team cannot normally recover their own kick unless it first touches a member of the receiving team, goes into the air and is caught by a member of the kicking team prior to the ball touching the ground.
- 1.6. When a kickoff or (free kick) goes out of bounds without touching a member of the receiving team, the receiving team has three options:
  - a) It can take the ball where it went out of bounds.
  - b) It can take the ball 30 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
  - c) It can force the kicking team to re-kick from 5 yards back from the previous kick.
- 1.7. If the ball hits a player on the receiving team then hits the ground the play is dead.

## **Rule 2 – The Scrimmage**

- 2.1. A huddle is not compulsory except in the following circumstances: after any time out; after a change in possession; after a change of ends at the end of a period. The offensive team has 25 seconds to snap the ball after the referee has blown the play in. Failure to do so will result in a five yard time count penalty.
- 2.2. Teams are allowed to have a partial huddle where some players are huddled and others are not, however, “sleeper” plays are illegal and subject to an illegal procedure penalty. The officials will call a “sleeper” play when the offense deliberately attempts to deceive the defense as to which players are legally on the field.
- 2.3. To begin a play from scrimmage, the ball must be placed on the ground, between the hash marks, and then snapped through the legs of the center to the quarterback, who is defined as the first player to touch the ball after it is snapped. The quarterback must receive the snap at least five yards behind the center. Prior to the snap, the center must position the ball between the legs next to the bean bag that marks the line of scrimmage. Failure to do so will result in a five yard illegal procedure penalty.
- 2.4. The first person to cross the line of scrimmage from the defense, usually referred to as the rusher, must be at least five yards away from the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap. The rusher must be allowed a clear and direct path to the quarterback. Members of the opposing team are not allowed to block or interfere with the rusher. To maintain this clear and direct path, the rusher must line up outside the feet of the opposing center, not directly in front of that player. Also, the rusher must line up within five yards of either side of the rushers bag. Lining up outside of this area causes a loss in rusher privileges. The rusher must not attempt to block or bat the ball from the quarterback's hand. This is a 15 yard penalty for "batting" even if there is no contact made. These rules apply if more than one rusher is used. Blocking or interfering with the rusher results in a ten yard obstruction penalty against the offense.
- 2.5. Once the center sets the ball on the ground for the snap, the rusher is not permitted to change sides and maintain rushing privileges with the center, unless the center is aware of the change or the quarterback goes in motion prior to the snap of the ball.
- 2.6. Once the center has set the ball, there must be a minimum of two stationary receivers either side of the center on the line of scrimmage.
- 2.7. If both teams go offside as the ball is snapped, the play is whistled dead and the down is replayed with no penalty.
- 2.8. To permit the center to participate in the play, no opponent is permitted to line up within three yards directly in front of the center and remain there after the snap. Players are not allowed to cross the line of scrimmage to listen to the opponent's huddle. These infractions would result in a five yard illegal procedure penalty.
- 2.9. Only one player can be in motion after the ball has been set by the center. A player can be in motion on the snap as long as they are not attacking the line of scrimmage. The play is whistled dead and a five yard illegal procedure penalty is applied.

### **Rule 3 – Passing**

- 3.1. All players are eligible to receive a forward pass. There can be only one forward pass on each scrimmage play. A forward pass is one which the ball is intentionally thrown or handed towards the opponent's goal line. A forward pass is legal, if it is the first pass thrown and must originate from behind the line of scrimmage. A forward pass cannot be legally thrown during a kick off or after the ball has been punted.
- 3.2. A pass is considered complete if the player has possession and control of the ball prior to going out of bounds. To be considered in bounds the receiver must touch the ground in bounds with some part of the body prior to any part of the body touching an out of bounds area. The boundary lines which mark the outer limits of the field are considered to be out of bounds.
- 3.3. If a receiver could have landed in bounds but was pushed out of bounds by an opponent, the catch will be awarded to the receiver. It is the official's judgement as to whether the receiver could have landed in bounds.
- 3.4. A pass caught simultaneously by players on opposite teams will be awarded to the team that had the possession prior to the pass.
- 3.5. A player who bobbles the ball and is flagged while bobbling the ball will be considered to be flagged if and when he finally gains possession of the ball. The ball will come back to the point where the receiver was first flagged by the opponent.
- 3.6. Players can lateral the ball at any time during play. A lateral pass, is a pass that travels parallel to, or in the direction of, the passer's dead ball line. An attempted lateral that results in the ball going forward and being caught by a teammate is illegal and is ruled an offside pass. If a player makes an offside pass, the ball comes back to the point the pass was initiated. A lateral ball that hits the ground is dead.
- 3.7. When an offensive player touches a lateral pass behind the line of scrimmage before any forward pass is thrown and the ball then touches the ground it is dead. The defense may touch the loose ball and down it to end the play.
- 3.8. A pass is incomplete when the ball touches the ground, the goal post, an official, or lands out of bounds.
- 3.9. A receiver may "spin" (360 degrees or greater turn) at the time of receiving a pass. A spin at any other time by the ball carrier will result in a 10 yard penalty.
- 3.10. When the passer deliberately throws a pass to an area where there is no receiver in an obvious attempt to avoid a loss of yards, the team will be penalized for grounding the ball. The penalty is a loss of down at the point the ball was thrown. However, the quarterback can throw a ball at his feet in the last two minutes of a half to stop the clock.
- 3.11. If a pass is intercepted in the end zone, no points are awarded and the team that intercepted the ball is awarded first down on their own 10 yard line.
- 3.12. If a ball carrier touches the ground with any part of their body apart from their feet, the play is whistled dead at that point.

- 3.13. If the ball carrier passes between two merging defenders the play will be whistled dead. The offensive player will be deemed "flagged" at that point.

#### **Rule 4 - Flagging**

- 4.1. A ball carrier is not permitted to spin in an effort to avoid being flagged. A receiver, immediately upon catching a pass, is allowed one continuous spin at the time of the reception, but not subsequently.
- 4.2. A ball carrier must not guard his flags by running with his hands below his waist in such a manner as to prevent a defender from reaching any of his flags.
- 4.3. Guarding a flag, or spinning, is a 10 yard penalty which is applied from the point of foul and the play is whistled dead at that point.
- 4.4. A defender is not permitted to hold on to any part of the ball carrier or his uniform when reaching in for the flag. This is a serious foul in that it has a significant impact on the opponent's progress. As such, it is considered a live ball foul that gives the offense the option of applying the 10 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and repeating the down, or as a dead ball foul, taking the 10 yard penalty from the point of foul without repeating the down. The choice will be given to the non-offending team.
- 4.5. Deliberate stripping of the ball from a ball carrier has a similar impact on a player's progress and is applied like the holding penalty; either as a 10 yard penalty from the previous line of scrimmage, repeat the down, or as a 10 yard penalty from the point of foul without repeating the down, at the discretion of the offense.
- 4.6. A player not in possession of the ball cannot be flagged. If a player is flagged prematurely, that player can be stopped by a tag but a 10 yard penalty will be applied from the point that the ball became dead. At any point if a player is flagged prematurely or loses their flag, the player can then be stopped by a tag.
- 4.7. A ball carrier cannot simply charge into a defender in order to get past him. The resulting contact would be a 15 yard personal foul penalty.
- 4.8. In the case of two merging defenders, intent on flagging the ball carrier, the official may rule the play dead in order to avoid a collision.

## **Rule 5 – Scoring**

- 5.1. A touch down counts as 6 points; a convert from the five yard line is 1 point; a convert from the 10 yard line is 2 points and a safety touch is 2 points.
- 5.2. A touchdown is scored by carrying the ball into the opponents end zone or by catching the ball in the opponents' end zone prior to it touching the ground. The ball is considered to be in the end zone when any part of the ball touches or crosses the plane of the goal line.
- 5.3. After a touchdown is scored, the scoring team may try a convert attempt. The scoring team will choose to attempt a 1 point convert from the five yard line, or a 2 point convert from the ten yard line. Converts are pass or run attempts, no kicking is allowed. If there is a penalty on a convert attempt, the scoring team is not permitted to change its choice if there is a repeated attempt.
- 5.4. On a convert attempt, the ball is scrimmaged in the center of the appropriate yard line. If there are goal posts on the field the scoring team has the right to move the ball to either hash mark (20 yards in from either sideline).
- 5.5. After a convert attempt, the non-scoring team may elect to have the scoring team kick off from their own 35 yard line or the non-scoring team may elect to kick off from their own 35 yard line.
- 5.6. A safety touch is awarded to a team when the offense causes the ball to go into their own end zone and the play is ruled dead prior to the ball being brought out of the end zone. A safety touch can also be awarded if the offense commits a penalty during the play. A ball is considered to be in the end zone if any part of the ball is still in the end zone.
- 5.7. After a safety touch, the non-scoring team will kick off or punt from the non-scoring team's 20 yard line.
- 5.8. No points are awarded on a punt or kick off that goes into the end zone. The ball will be scrimmaged on the receiving teams 10 yard line.

## **Rule 6 – Punts**

- 6.1. For a ball to be considered a punt it must be deliberately dropped and then kicked with the foot before the ball touches the ground.
- 6.2. Any player may punt the ball, as long as they are behind the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is legally punted, the punting team gives up possession of the ball.
- 6.3. After a punt, players of the punting team cannot touch the ball or be touched by the ball until an opponent touches the ball. They must also be at least two yards away (a halo) from the ball when it is first touched by an opposing player. Failure to do so will result in a ten yard “no yards” penalty from the point the ball was first touched. If the offending player did not affect the play in any way, the penalty will be applied as a five yard penalty.
- 6.4. Any player on the receiving team can catch a punt and advance it. There is no blocking permitted on a punt return. If a player attempts to catch a punt and the ball touches the player then hits the ground, the play is dead when the ball hits the ground.
- 6.5. A punt is considered blocked by the opposing team when a player of that team strikes the ball and the ball travels in the direction of, or parallel to, the punting team’s dead ball line and hits the ground or is caught by a player of the punting team. The play is ruled dead and the non-punting team will take possession of the ball at the point the ball was blocked.
- 6.6. If a punt is deflected by a member of the receiving team and the ball travels in the direction of the receiving team’s dead ball line, the punt is legal and the play continues. The deflection is ignored and “yards” must be given by members of the kicking team.
- 6.7. When a punted ball hits the ground behind the line of scrimmage or behind the kicker’s goal line, the play is dead. If this occurs in the field of play, the opposing team will take possession of the ball at the point the ball hits the ground. If this occurs in the end zone the opposing team will be awarded a safety touch if it is a scrimmage play, or a single point, if it is a return punt from the end zone.
- 6.8. When a punt is blocked in the field of play, the non-punting team is considered to be in possession. If the punt is blocked in the end zone, the punting team is considered to be in possession.
- 6.9. If a player accidentally or deliberately kicks the ball with the foot or leg without having had control of the ball in the hand, the ball becomes an onside or offside pass depending on its direction and will remain live until it hits the ground.

## **Rule 7 – Timing & Time outs**

- 7.1. Each game will be divided into four fifteen (15) minute quarters. The last two minutes of the second and fourth quarter will be stop time (13 minutes plus 2 minutes). During these two-minute periods the clock will stop for the following and restart on the snap of the ball:
- a. Any team or official time out (maximum two, one minute time outs allowed per half).
  - b. Any applied penalty.
  - c. Any incomplete forward pass.
  - d. Any time a player in possession of the ball goes out of bounds.
  - e. Any intentional grounding of the football (once teams are set).
  - f. After a touch down or safety.
  - g. After a change of possession.
  - h. On a fair catch of a punted ball.

Officials must stop the clock at 2 minutes and there will be a 30 second time out. The clock will start again on the snap of the next play.

- 7.2. Each team is allowed a maximum of six time outs per game. There are two 60-second time outs per half, which, if not used in the first half, cannot be carried over to the second half, and one 30-second time out at the two minute warning notification at the end of each half.
- 7.3. Any on field player can request the referee to call a time out. Time outs can only be called during dead ball situations.
- 7.4. The referee will notify each team when there are 15 seconds left in the time out. A time out may be shortened if both teams agree.
- 7.5. All offensive players must huddle after a time out or be penalized five yards for illegal procedure.
- 7.6. After a time out, the clock will not start until the snap of the ball on the subsequent play. If the subsequent play is a kick off, the clock will not start until the ball is touched by a player on the receiving team. If the ball goes out of bounds on the kick off the clock will start on the snap on the subsequent play.
- 7.7. A team cannot call two consecutive time outs without a play occurring between the time outs.
- 7.8. The referee may stop the clock when it is deemed necessary by any of the officials. The clock will start after the referee whistles the next play in.

- 7.9. The clock is stopped when a ten yard delay of game penalty is applied. The clock will start when the ball is snapped or kicked off.
- 7.10. The clock is stopped when a safety touch is scored. The clock will start when the referee whistles in the subsequent play.
- 7.11. If the referee takes a time out for an injury to one of the players, the injured player must be removed for at least one play unless the team decides to use a time out.
- 7.12. If the game is tied after regulation time and a winner must be declared, overtime can be played. Options for conducting overtime include playing an overtime period of twenty minutes, divided into two 10 minute halves. Overtime can also involve the use of converts to break the tie, with each team being given three convert attempts, alternating on offense then defense. League and tournament organizers are encouraged to clearly define their method of overtime prior to the league or tournament play.

## **Rule 8 - Pass Interference**

- 8.1. Pass interference is defined as one player taking away the positional advantage of another player. A player significantly hinders the opponent's opportunity to gain or retain position to catch or intercept a legal forward pass. This can occur:
  - a. through direct contact whereby one player makes contact with an opponent and causes the opponent to move off stride or away from the opponent's intended direction;
  - b. when a player steps into the established path of an opponent, causing the opponent to slow down or change direction;
  - c. during a deliberate attempt to block the opponent from reaching the arrival point of the ball.
- 8.2. Face Guarding - If a player is not playing the ball and has their back to the ball extends the arms or waves a hand in an attempt to distract a receiver or defender by blocking their vision. This is a form of pass interference that does not involve contact.
- 8.3. Pass interference should not be called when the ball is obviously uncatchable by the receiver or the defender.
- 8.4. Both offensive and defensive players can be called for pass interference. If the defense commits pass interference the offense is awarded the ball at the point of the infraction (as if the pass was completed), or ten yards in advance of the point of last scrimmage, and is an automatic first down. If the offense commits pass interference and the penalty is accepted, the offense is penalized 15 yards from the point of last scrimmage.
- 8.5. If defensive interference occurs in the defending team's end zone, the next play begins at the one yard line (or half the distance to the goal if the line of scrimmage was within the defending team's 2 yard line.)

## **Rule 9 - Equipment**

- 9.1. Teams may use their own football during the game, or if they agree, one game ball may be used by both teams. Each league or tournament can set its own specifications regarding the dimensions and type of football to be used based on the age and skill of the participants. No team or player is permitted to make alterations to the natural surface of the ball being used. Teams doing so will be penalized ten yards for objectionable conduct.
- 9.2. Players are not permitted to use adhesive material, paint, grease or any other slippery substance applied to equipment or on a player's person, clothing or attachments that affects the ball or an opponent. (exception: eye shade). Players who do so will be penalized ten yards for objectionable conduct and will be removed from the game until it is removed.
- 9.3. If two teams are using similar sweaters, the winner of the coin toss has the option to change sweaters. Uniforms cannot contain any equipment that would cause injury to any player. The referee will be the final authority on equipment that may be injurious to participants or on any equipment or devices that are not covered in the rules.
- 9.4. Jewelry must be removed prior to the start of the game. If it is not possible to remove the jewelry it must be covered up completely. Medical bracelets may be worn but they must be fastened securely so as not to cause injury. The referee will have the final decision as to the acceptability of equipment.
- 9.5. It is not mandatory to wear cleated shoes, but shoes with heels are not acceptable. Spikes or similar sharp pointed type shoes such as track spikes, metal baseball cleats, or golf shoes are not permitted. If cleated shoes are worn, there is no minimum or maximum number of cleats to be worn, but the cleats must be a part of the natural design of the shoe.
- 9.6. If a player is wearing unacceptable equipment or shoes, the player must leave the game for at least one play and remove the equipment before returning. If the player returns to the game with the unacceptable equipment, the team will be penalized for objectionable conduct and the player will be ejected.
- 9.7. If a participant has incurred a wound that is bleeding, or if there is enough blood on a participant, or on the participant's uniform to such an extent that it may be transferred to another individual, the participant must leave the playing field until the problem is resolved to the satisfaction of the referee.
- 9.8. Players must not wear shorts or pants that have pockets, press studs or clips of any kind. Players cannot tape or secure their shorts or pants to meet this regulation.
- 9.9. Only I.F.A.F. orange **Sonic FLAG-A-TAG Belts** with 3 flags can be used at any sanctioned flag football event. Every effort must be made to keep one flag on each hip and one in the middle of the back. These flags must not be altered or cut, and the sockets must not be glued or changed in any way. Players caught with a tampered belt of flags, will be ejected from the game. They will also face possible further discipline from the tournament organizing committee. The I.F.A.F. flag belts and 3 flags must be clearly visible and must not be covered in any way by the players uniform.

## **Rule 10 - Procedures**

- 10.1. The standard field is 100 yards long and 53.5 yards wide with 10 yard end zones at each end. Hash marks should be 20 yards in from each sideline. Center field is at the 50 yard line. Boundary lines must be at least one foot inside obstructions or tracks. This may also be measured in meters.
- 10.2. Goal posts are not required for the game of flag football. If they are present, they must be padded to prevent injury. Goal posts are considered to be in the end zone.
- 10.3. The team benches should be on the same side of the field opposite the spectators. They should be a minimum of five yards back from the sideline and between the 10 and 45 yard line. Players must stay in their bench area when off the field or be penalized ten yards for objectionable conduct.
- 10.4. Each team may have a maximum of seven players on the field during play. The team cannot play with less than seven players on the field during the game. If a team has more than seven players on the field during a play, the team will be penalized ten yards for illegal substitution.
- 10.5. Substitute players may enter the field only when the play is dead. Substitutes must enter from the bench side and players leaving the field must go directly to the bench area. Substitutes may not enter the field after the offense has broken its huddle or after the kicker has began the approach to the ball on a kick off. A player who enters the field to communicate a play to a teammate must remain on the field for the next play. The penalty for violating these rules is ten yards for illegal substitution.
- 10.6. Teams are permitted a maximum of four captains per game. Only the captains are permitted to discuss rule applications with the referee, to request measurements, and to choose options on penalty applications.
- 10.7. Bean bags are used to mark the line of scrimmage, the rusher's line and the first down marker. Each bag should be at least 4" square. Two bags are of the same color - one for the line of scrimmage and one for the rusher's position, and the third bag, indicating the first down marker, must be of a different color.
- 10.8. If there is an inadvertent whistle by the officials on a play, the play will stand if the whistle did not affect the outcome of the play. If the outcome was affected by the whistle, the team that was affected can let the play stand as of the whistle, or repeat the play from the point of last scrimmage. If it is not possible to determine who was adversely affected, the play will be repeated.
- 10.9. If the ball touches an official during play, it will be treated as if the ball touched the ground during the play and the appropriate ruling will be made.
- 10.10. At the time the offensive center sets the ball there must be at least two receivers on the line of scrimmage on each side of the center. The penalty is 5 yards for procedure.
- 10.11. Only one offensive player is allowed to be in motion at a time before the snap of the ball. This player may be moving laterally or backwards when the ball is snapped. They cannot be moving forward. Penalty is 5 yards for this infraction.

## **Rule 11 - Live Ball/Dead Ball**

- 11.1 If the ball hits the goal post the play is whistled dead.
  - a. If it is a kickoff and the ball hits the goal post in flight the ball is placed at the receiving team's 10 yard line. If it hits the goal post after striking the ground or a player of the receiving team, it will be also placed on the receiving team's 10 yard line.
  - b. If it is a punt from the field of play, the ball is placed at the 10 yard line and no points are awarded. If it is the initial punt from the team's own end zone, it is a safety touch.
  - c. If it is a forward pass from behind the line of scrimmage, the play is dead and the ball comes back to the line of scrimmage and loss of down.
  - d. If it is an onside lateral by the offense and the ball hits the goal post in flight, it is a safety touch.
- 11.2. If a ball lies motionless on the ground for three seconds and there is no attempt to play the ball, the play shall be whistled dead.
- 11.3. Players are not allowed to extend the ball, in their hand, to gain additional yards while the play is live. There is a five yard penalty for doing so and the ball is considered dead at the point the extension began.
- 11.4. Players who have possession of the ball are not permitted to dive forward in an effort to gain additional yards. The penalty is 15 yards and the ball is considered dead at the point the dive began.
- 11.5. When the play is live and a member of the defensive team deliberately flags the ball carrier, the play will be whistled dead. The official must see the flag for the whistle to be blown. The flag can be with one or two hands.
- 11.6. Contact in the neck, head, or face area of the ball carrier is considered to be unnecessary. and will be called as a 15 yard personal foul unless the contact was the result of the actions of the ball carrier.
- 11.7. Once a ball carrier is on the ground, or any part of his body touches the ground the play is whistled dead.
- 11.8. If the quarterback mishandles the snap or the snap travels over the quarterback's head without being touched, the ball is live to the Quarterback only.

## **Rule 12 - Penalties** (Alphabetical Listing)

**Delay of Game** - this is a 10 yard penalty. It is called when the kicking team on a kick off does not kick the ball within the allotted twenty-five seconds or when a team is deliberately delaying the game.

**Deliberate Grounding of the Ball** - if a player deliberately grounds the ball to avoid being touched, the ball will be placed at the point the passer released the ball with the loss of that down. The exception is if the quarterback grounds the ball on purpose to stop the clock in the last 2 minutes of a half.

**Diving** - the ball carrier is not allowed to dive with the ball in order to gain extra yards. This will be considered a 15 yard personal foul and is applied as a dead ball foul from the point where the dive began.

**Extension** - the ball carrier is not allowed to extend the ball with the arms in an effort to gain extra yards. This is applied as a dead ball foul from the point of the torso of the ball carrier when the extension took place. It is a five yard penalty.

**Flag Guarding** - any player in possession of the ball that uses any part of their arm, hand etc., to obstruct the defender from obtaining their flag will result in a stoppage of play at the point of the infraction. This is also a 10 yard penalty.

**Flagging Fouls** – a defender cannot hold on to a ball carrier or his uniform while flagging the ball carrier. This can be a live ball or a dead ball foul. Neither can a defender “bat” the ball out of a ball carriers hand to stop play. This is also applied as a live ball or dead ball foul at the discretion of the non-offending team.

**Illegal Participation** - if a defensive player illegally enters the field while a play is in progress and affects the outcome of the play, the opponents will be awarded a touch down and the player is ejected from the game. If a fan illegally participates in the game and a touchdown would have been scored without the participation, then the touchdown must be awarded. If the fan did not affect the outcome of the play, the play stands. If the fan affected the outcome of the play, the team has the option to repeat the play from the point of last scrimmage.

**Illegal Re-Entry** - a player is not permitted to leave the field of play during a play, return to the field of play, and then directly participates in the play. The penalty is 10 yards for illegal re-entry.

- a. by the offense on a kickoff - the penalty is applied at the spot the ball was held when the infraction took place.
- b. by the offense on a scrimmage play - if a first down was not made, the penalty is applied at the point of last scrimmage, down repeated. If a first down was made prior to the infraction, the penalty is applied at the point of foul, down is not repeated.
- c. by the offense on a convert - no score is allowed and no repeated attempt is given.
- d. by the defense on a kick off - the penalty is applied at the spot the ball was held when the infraction took place.

- e. by the defense on a scrimmage play - the offense has the option to apply the penalty at the point of last scrimmage with the down repeated or at the point the ball was held at the time of the infraction and downs continue.
- f. by the defense on a convert attempt - if the foul occurred in the end zone, the point or points are awarded. If the foul occurred in the field of play, the penalty is applied at the point of last scrimmage and a repeat attempt is given.
- g. if the foul occurs after a change of possession on a scrimmage play, the penalty is applied at the spot the ball was held at the time of the infraction.
- h. on any play, if a score would have been made without the illegal re-entry, then the score is awarded.

**Illegal Substitution** - this occurs when a player illegally enters the field. Players are not allowed to enter the field on a scrimmage play after the offense breaks its huddle or, if there is no huddle, after the official signals no more substitutions. On a kickoff, players cannot legally enter the field after the kicker begins the approach to the ball. If a team has more than seven players on the field during a play, it is illegal substitution.

**Illegal use of Hands** - offensive or defensive players are not permitted to grab the goal posts in order to change direction or take an unfair advantage. Penalty is 10 yards for illegal use of hands.

**Major Foul** - these are acts which threaten the safety of participants and will result in the ejection of the player responsible. They include: deliberate tripping of an opponent; striking or attempting to strike an opponent; any attempt to injure a participant in the game. Major fouls are 25 yard fouls and considered to be dead ball fouls except for the following: roughing the passer, roughing the kicker, tripping the ball carrier, roughing the ball carrier or the intended receiver on the last play of a half.

**No Yards** - this occurs when the punting team encroaches within the one yard restraining zone on a punt. Members of the punting team must not come within a one yard radius of the punt returner prior to the touching of the ball by the receiving team. This is a 10 yard penalty, to be applied from the point the ball was first touched by the receiving team.

**Objectionable Conduct** - these penalties are applied as 10 yard dead ball fouls. The following actions are considered to be objectionable conduct fouls: the use of profane language, taunting opposing players, throwing the opponent's flag, demeaning remarks made to opposing players, persistent arguments to officials, deliberately delaying the game, batting, faking an injury or contact to draw a penalty or delay the game, or any action which brings disrepute to the game.

**Obstruction** - players are not permitted to block or obstruct an opponent's direct path to the ball carrier. Contact does not have to occur for this penalty to be called. Penalty is 10 yards for obstruction.

Players are permitted to take a stationary position in order to avoid being called for a penalty, providing it is taken in sufficient time to allow the opponent to adjust to it. This rule does not apply to the center who is obliged to move out of the direct path of a legally positioned rusher on a scrimmage play.

**Offside** - if a player encroaches in the one yard neutral zone as the ball is snapped, it will result in a 5 yard offside penalty. The neutral zone extends one yard back from the line of scrimmage on the defensive side of the ball. If the first defensive player to cross the line of scrimmage did not rush from at least five yards away from the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap or after the snap, an offside penalty will be called.

**Offside Pass** - the ball is brought back to the point the pass originated and downs continue.

**Pass Interference** - if the defense commits it, the ball is awarded to the offense at the point of the foul or the point of last scrimmage or 10 yards from the point of scrimmage, and an automatic first down is awarded to the offense. Flagging a receiver before they have possession of the ball is also pass interference. If the offense commits the interference it will be marked off as 15 yard penalty against the offense from the last point of scrimmage.

(If the defense commits in the end zone on a convert attempt, the convert will be awarded. If the offense commits pass interference, no repeat attempt is given.)

**Personal Fouls** - these are acts of roughness or unfair play. Players must control their momentum and try to avoid collisions with opponents. A shove, or roughing when flagging the ball carrier shall be considered a personal foul. Charging, lowering the shoulders, elbowing or throwing the body into a group of defenders by the ball carrier is considered to be a personal foul. Personal fouls are 15 yard penalties and considered to be dead ball or live ball fouls.

**Time count violation** - the offensive team has 25 seconds after the play is blown in by the referee to snap the ball. Failure to do so results in a five yard time count violation penalty which is applied from the point of last scrimmage with the down repeated.

### **Rule 13 - Application of Penalties**

- 13.1. A penalty can be refused by the non-offending team. However, if there is an ejection given by the referee that player must leave the game.
- 13.2. If the non-offending team refuses a penalty, the play stands and downs continue. If the penalty is accepted, the referee will explain the options to the non-offending team's captain. Once a team has given its choice to the referee, it cannot be changed. If they have been given the wrong options by the referee, they must appeal to the referee prior to the ball being put into play on the next down or kickoff.
- 13.3. If a team commits two or more live ball fouls during the same play, the non-offending team can only accept to apply one of the fouls. However, the non-offending team may have an option to apply one of the live ball fouls as a dead ball foul.
- 13.4. If there is more than one dead ball foul called against the same team during one play, all fouls can be applied. If each team commits a dead ball foul on the same play, only the difference in yardage will be applied.
- 13.5. The application of a penalty will not result in the ball being placed closer than the one yard line. When a single fixed distance penalty is applied inside the opposing team's thirty yard line, the ball cannot be brought more than half the distance to the goal line. If the fixed distance penalty is applied from outside the opposing team's thirty yard line, it cannot bring the ball closer than the fifteen yard line. If the normal penalty yardage were applied and the ball would have reached the goal line due to the penalty, a first down will be awarded to the offense.
- 13.6. On a fourth down play, the offense cannot be awarded a first down by the application of a dead ball foul. Possession changes to the defense and the penalty is applied.
- 13.7. If the defense commits a live ball foul that results in a first down being awarded by the application of the penalty yardage, the first down cannot be taken away if the offense commits a dead ball foul on the play. The first down would be awarded and the penalty yardage for the dead ball foul would then be applied. It would be first down and ten after the application of the dead ball foul.
- 13.8. If a team commits a dead ball penalty on a play that results in a touchdown or on a convert attempt, the non-penalized team has the option to apply the penalty on the convert attempt or the repeated convert attempt, if there is one, or on the subsequent kick off.
- 13.9. If a team accepts a live ball foul that occurs on the last play of the quarter (other than an offside pass or obstruction after a first down is gained), there will be one more play given to the team that has possession. Dead ball fouls that occur on the last play of a quarter will be applied in the next quarter.
- 13.10. Fixed distance penalties are applied in the following manner unless a previous rule states otherwise:
  - a. If the foul occurs before the ball is put into play, as the ball is put into play, or before a first down is gained, the penalty will be applied at the point the ball was last put into play and the down will be repeated.

- b. If the foul occurs after a first down has been gained, the penalty will be applied from the spot the ball was held at the time of the infraction. The offense will be awarded a first down.
- c. If a foul is committed after the offense loses possession of the ball, the penalty will be applied from the spot the ball was held at the time of the infraction. A first down will be awarded to the team that has possession of the ball. If the penalty was called when the ball was in the air as the result of a kick off or punt, the penalty will be applied at the point the ball is first touched by the receiving team.

## **Rule 14 - General**

- 14.1. If a team refuses to start or continue a game at the request of the referee, the referee can award the game to the non-offending team after two warnings to the captain of the offending team. If the game is tied or the offending team is leading at the time, the game will be forfeited by a score of 1-0. If the non-offending team is winning at the time, the score will count.
- 14.2. If there are goal posts on the field and the ball is scrimmaged within the offensive team's twenty yard line, the ball must be moved to the closest hash mark.
- 14.3. If a team scrimmages within five yards of the opposing team's goal line and there are goal posts on the field, the ball must be scrimmaged at the closest hash mark.
- 14.4. The referee will decide on any on-field ruling which is not covered by this Rule Book.