

Flag Football Rules

NIRSA National Collegiate Flag Football Rules shall govern play with the following clarifications and exceptions.

A participant may plan for only one (1) team.

GENERAL RULES

Official Team: An official team shall consist of seven (7) players. A minimum of five (5) players must be present to start the game and avoid a forfeit.

Ready to Play: “Ready to play” means that a team must be on the playing are with a minimum of five players. A team will not be considered as “ready to play” unless they have five (5) players.

Claiming a Forfeit: In flag football games the team present and “ready to play” 5 minutes after the game is scheduled to start, may claim a win by forfeit.

Officials: The intramural staff will assign officials for each scheduled game. All flag football games conducted by the Division of Campus Recreation must be played under the supervision of the filed supervisor employed by the Division. No game may be played without its being scheduled through the Intramural Office. An intramural official will keep the scorecard.

EQUIPMENT

Shoes: Each player must wear athletic shoes. They must be made of soft, pliable upper material (molded plastic, canvas, leather, or synthetic) which covers the foot attached to a composition bottom. Shows with Metal, ceramic, screw-in or detachable cleats are not permitted.

Jerseys: For all flag football games, colored jerseys must be worn to help distinguish one team from another. During the game jerseys must be tucked in at all times and/or the entire flag belt must be visible by players and officials.

Illegal equipment: Pants or shorts must be free of pockets, drawstrings, and exposed belt loops. All jewelry must be removed before playing. This includes earrings, necklaces, watches, and rings. Sweatshirts must also not have pockets exposed and hoods must be tucked inside the shirt. Stocking hats may be worn, but any hat with a hard bill may not be. Helmets, casts, shoulder pads, and boots are all examples of illegal equipment. Any equipment that in the official’s judgment would be injurious to participants is illegal to wear.

Flags: The intramural sports staff will furnish official Triple Threat Flag belts for all contests. All flag belts worn by a team should be the same color. Competing teams should wear different colored flags.

Ball: Men will use a regulation football. Women may use a regulation, intermediate, or youth ball. The game official will choose the game ball for each game from among the balls he/she brings out from the equipment room or from one of the teams. Teams may check out a practice ball from the equipment room.

GAME REGULATIONS

Game Time: A game shall consist of two 20-minute halves, with a 5-minute half-time intermission.

Timing: Regular playing time will be kept on an automatic timing device. The clock will be kept running throughout the first half and the first 18 minutes of the second half and will not stop for dead balls.

Two Minute Warning: There will be a “two-minute warning” in the second half of play. The NIRSA “Mercy Rule” will be in effect. If a team is 17 or more points ahead in men’s or women’s when the referee announces the 2 minute warning for the second half or any time after, the game shall be over. If the game is not ended by the mercy rule, the clock will stop on a dead ball situation the final two minutes.

Start of Game: The game shall start with a coin toss. The referee shall toss a coin in the presence of the opposing team captains, after first designating which captain shall call the fall of the coin. The captain winning the toss shall choose one of the following: (1) take option in the first half (2) take option in the second half. The options available to teams each half are (1) offense (2) defend a goal. The team not choosing the option in the first half will choose the option at the start of the second half.

Starting Play: To start each half, following a touchdown, or touchback, the ball will be placed on the 20-yard line of the team in possession. There will be no kickoffs.

Time Outs: Each team will be allowed two time-outs per game. The referee may declare a time-out for any injury.

Tie Game: If the score is tied at the end of regulation play during the regular league season, the game will be declared a tie. Overtime procedures will be used in the single elimination playoffs. This procedure will be explained to the team in the event of a tie.

Scoring: Touchdown - 6 points
Safety - 2 points
PAT (run or pass) - 2 points from 10 yd. line; 1 point from 3 yd. line.

BASIC RULES

Zone Lines: The field is divided into four 20-yard zones. A team will have a series of downs to advance the ball to the next zone.

Series of Downs: A team shall have four (4) consecutive downs to advance the ball into the next zone. This may be affected by penalty.

Scrimmage Line: The scrimmage line for the offensive team is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes through the forward point of the ball. The scrimmage line for the defensive team is the vertical plane which passes one yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line.

Stance: Players may use a 2, 3, or 4 point stance.

Minimum Line Players: The offensive team must have at least 4 players on their scrimmage line at the snap. All remaining players must be on or behind the scrimmage line.

Motion: One offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line at the snap.

Snapping the Ball: Each time the ball is snapped it must be a quick and continuous motion of the hand(s). The ball must leave the hand(s) in this motion.

Direct Snap: The player who receives the snap must be at least two (2) yards behind the offensive scrimmage line. **No Direct Snaps!**

Ball in Play: On each play after the referee sounds the ready for play whistle, the team on offense has 25 seconds to put the ball in play.

HANDLING AND PASSING THE BALL

Handing the Ball Backwards: Any player may hand the ball backwards at any time at any location on the field.

Handing the Ball Forwards: During a scrimmage down, an offensive player may hand the ball forward behind the line only.

Backward Pass: A runner may pass the ball backward or lose player possession by a fumble anytime except if intentionally thrown out-of-bounds to conserve time.

Backward Pass out-of-bounds: A backward pass or fumble which goes out-of-bounds between the goal lines belongs to the team last in possession at the out-of-bounds spot. If out-of-bounds behind the goal line, it is a touchback or a safety.

Ball Dead: A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead at the spot where it touches the ground and belongs to the team last in possession unless lost on down.

Eligible Receivers: All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass.

Legal Forward Pass: During a scrimmage down a forward pass may be thrown providing the passer's feet are behind the offensive scrimmage line when the ball leaves the passer's hand.

Illegal Forward Pass: A forward pass is illegal if:

1. The passer's foot is beyond the scrimmage line when the ball leaves his/her hand.
2. Thrown after team possession has changed during a down.
3. Intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to save loss of yardage.
4. A passer catches his/her untouched forward or backward pass.
5. There is more than one forward pass per down.

Legal Catch or Interception: A forward pass is considered a catch as long as the first part of the person to make contact with the ground after the catch touches inbound. One foot must touch inbound to be considered a catch.

Simultaneous Catch by Opposing Players: If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the team that snapped the ball at the spot of the catch.

Incomplete Pass: When a forward pass touches the ground or anything out-of-bounds, it becomes dead.

BLOCKING

Blocking: All players will be limited to screen blocking. Screen blocking is legally obstructing an opponent without contacting him with any part of the screen blocker's body.

Offensive Screen Blocking: The offensive screen block shall take place without contact. The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind his/her back. Any use of the arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker may use his/her hand or arm to break a fall or to retain his/her balance.

Screen Blocking Fundamentals: A player who screens shall not:

1. When he/she is behind a stationary opponent, take position closer than a normal step from him or her.
2. When he/she assumes a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent, make contact with him/her.
3. Takes a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or direction. The speed of the player to be screened determines where the screener may take his/her position. This position will vary and may be 1 normal step or stride from the opponent.
4. After assuming his/her legal screening position move maintain it, unless he/she moves in the same direction and path of his/her opponent. If the screener violates any of these provisions and contact results, he/she has committed a personal foul.

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

Use of Hands or Arms by the Defense. Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used as a wedge to contact the opponent. The application of this rule depends entirely on the judgement of the official. A blocker may use his/her arms or hands to break a fall or retain his/her balance.

FLAG BELT REMOVAL

Basics: When the flag belt is clearly taken from the runner the down shall end and the ball is declared dead. A player who removes the flag belt from the runner should immediately hold the flag belt above his/her head to assist the official.

Inadvertent Removal: If a flag belt inadvertently falls to the ground, a one hand tag between the shoulders and knees constitutes capture.

Diving: A player, who is attempting to remove the flag belt, may leave his/her feet. Any contact will be considered the fault of the person diving.

Defensive Contact: In an attempt to remove the flag belt from a runner, defensive players may contact the body and shoulders of an opponent with their hands, not their face or any part of their neck or head. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag belt.

RUNNER

Guarding the Flag Belt: Runners shall not guard the flag by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opponent an opportunity to remove the flag belt. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt.
2. Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt.
3. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that places them over the flag belt.

Stiff-Arm: The runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with extended arm or hand.

Obstructing the Runner: The defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt.

Charging: A runner shall not charge into an opponent in his/her path. The runner must avoid contact by changing direction.

Knee Touching Ground: the ball becomes dead if any part of the carrier, other than the hands

or feet, touches the ground.

KICKING

Protected Scrimmage Kick: The only kick permitted shall be a punt. For each scrimmage kick, offensive team must maintain four players on the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked. No one shall rush the kicker and no player from either team shall cross the scrimmage line until the ball is kicked.

Quick Kick: Quick kicks are illegal.

Punting After the Snap: After receiving the snap, the kicker must punt the ball immediately and in a continuous motion.

Hitting the Ground: The ball may strike the ground on a protected scrimmage kick and then be picked up by the receiving team or downed by the kicking team.

Behind the Goal Line: The receiving team may receive the protected scrimmage kick behind the goal line and either down the ball for a touchback or run the ball out of the end zone. If the ball goes out of the end zone, it is ruled as a touchback.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

Captain's Choice: When a foul occurs, the Referee shall notify both captains. The Referee shall inform the captain of the offended team regarding their options on the penalty. Once a penalty has been accepted or declined, that choice may not be changed.

Establishing the Zone Line-to-gain: The zone line-to-gain shall be established after all penalties are administered and prior to the ready for play signal.

Half the Distance: A measurement cannot take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending teams goal line. If the penalty is greater than this, the ball is placed halfway between the enforcement spot and the goal line.

Loss of Down Fouls: Fouls by the offense that result in a loss of down include:

1. Illegally handing the ball forward
2. Illegal backward pass
3. Illegal forward pass
4. Forward pass interference
5. Illegally secured flag belt

Automatic First Down Fouls: Fouls by the defense that result in an automatic first down include:

1. Forward pass interference
2. Roughing the passer who has thrown a legal forward pass

3. Illegally secured flag belt

RULEBOOKS

Official NIRSA National Collegiate Flag/Touch Football Rule Books are available at the equipment center Recreational Sports Center.