

# RULE BOOK FOR NEXT LEVEL ALTHETICS FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Winter Session / Last Updated: 2/23/2024

- No Contact or Blocking is allowed.
- The Quarterback cannot run the ball unless he or she has received a direct handoff behind the line of scrimmage.
- All players are eligible to receive a pass.
- The player who rushes the QB must start **7 yards** off the line of scrimmage (10U/13U Divisions Only).
- The offense has **4 downs to pass midfield** and then 3 downs to score. On 4<sup>th</sup> down, the offensive team can choose to go for the first down or choose to “punt” (turnover and the ball is placed on the 5-yard line). If they do not get the first down, it is a turnover and the opposing team gets the ball where the offensive team was stopped.  
*\*\* A turnover on downs will occur if the offense is short of the first down or end zone or if the ball is ruled dead (due to hitting the ceiling, wall, etc.) resulting in an immediate possession change spotting the ball at the opponent’s 5-yard line.*
- All possessions, except interceptions, will start at the 5-yard line.
- **Games are run with two 15-minute halves (continuous clock) and a 2-minute half time.**
- **Time can be shortened if league administration feels that the game is getting out of hand.**
- Interceptions may be returned.
- **Offensive penalties in all divisions will result in a loss of down.**
- **Defensive penalties will result in an automatic first down.**
- The offensive team is responsible for collecting the line of scrimmage puck.
- **If there is an inadvertent whistle blown, the down is replayed**
- Flag Guarding- any movement of the receiver/rusher inhibiting, prohibiting, blocking, (with or without making contact) is flag guarding. \*Coach players to run with their arms up.
- **Once receiver or runner has control of the ball, ALL other offensive players should freeze.**

## THE ATTIRE

- Players are required to wear protective mouthpieces at all times during a game.
- **Players must have “pocket-less” shorts – Taping pockets on shorts is NOT allowed! If a player has pockets on their shorts, they are not eligible to play.**
- Jerseys must be tucked in at all times. If a jersey is hanging over their flag belt, flag guarding may be called.
- Players must have flag and flag belt properly on hips (1 flag on each side).
- Tennis shoes and indoor soccer cleats are permitted. No outdoor cleats are allowed.

## THE POSSESSIONS

- The referee will flip a coin/puck before the start of the game to determine possession of ball for first or second half.
- The team that wins the toss has the choice of offense or defense. At halftime the teams will automatically switch directions.
- All possession changes will start at the offensive team’s 5-yard line. Exception: On interceptions the team will take possession of the ball where the defender’s flag was pulled. Penalties on interceptions will be assessed where the interception occurred. Exception: If the game referee judges that a player intentionally or flagrantly commits a penalty then the penalty will be at the point of the foul, no less than the point of interception.

## COACHES ON FIELD

- Only one coach will be allowed on the field on offense. Offensive coach must back up, out of the way at the snap of the ball. Defensive coaches can direct and align players before the play and move away from the playing area.

## THE PASSING GAME

- Only one forward pass per down. All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are legal, but must be beyond the line of scrimmage.
- No screen passes or pitching the ball behind the line of scrimmage.
- QB has a seven (7) second “pass clock”. **THE REFEREE WILL BLOW THE WHISTLE ON THE 7 COUNT.** If the pass is not thrown within seven seconds, the play will be ruled dead, with a loss of down. Interceptions can be returned. The ball is spotted where the flag is pulled.
- If a penalty occurs on an interception return by the return team, the penalty will be assessed from the end of the interception.
- If a penalty occurs on an interception return by the defensive team, the penalty will be assessed from the end of the run.

## THE RECEIVING GAME

- All players must start with their flag belts on. If a player starts without his flag belt properly secure with all flags attached, His/her team will be assessed a 5 yard and loss of down penalty.
- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the QB, if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- **Only one player is allowed in motion at a time.**
- **A receiver is down where his or her flag belt is pulled or falls off.**  
*\*\* Exception: In order to achieve a first down, or a touchdown, the ball carriers entire flag belt (2 flags) and ball, must cross the plane of the first down line and/or goal line.*
- If a receiver's flag belt falls off or is pulled off, before catch is made, the receiver is down where they caught the ball.
- Receiver must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch.
- **No laterals.**

## THE RUNNING GAME

- The QB cannot run the ball. The QB can only run the ball if he or she has taken a direct hand-off.
- Only direct hand-offs behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Anyone behind the line of scrimmage can receive a hand-off.  
*\*\* Exception: The ball cannot be handed off forward, between the center's legs.*
- At the start of a play, the center is permitted to hand the ball to the quarterback between their legs OR to the side.
- The player who takes the hand-off can throw the ball, as long as he or she does not cross the line of scrimmage first.
- **Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to go after the offensive players flags.**
- **Once the ball has been handed off by the QB, the seven-second pass rule is no longer in effect.**
- **Defensive players cannot pass the line of scrimmage, during a direct hand-off play, until the ball is handed off.**  
*\*\*Exception - Unless they started 7 yards from the line of scrimmage and are rushing (10u and 13u divisions only)*
- Jumping (unless avoiding a collision with a player—not to advance yardage) and diving to advance the ball is not allowed.
- If a flag falls off while the player is running, the player is down where the flag dropped.

## THE "RUN ZONES" (10u & 13u Division ONLY)

- "No Run Zones" located five (5) yards from each end zone and five (5) yards on both sides of mid-field.
- "No Run Zones" are designed to avoid short yardage situations.
- "No Run Zones" come into effect only when offensive team is approaching a first down or the end zone. Exception: If the offensive team has already achieved a first down, but has been pushed back into a "No Run Zone", then the "No Run Zone" is no longer in effect.

## THE RUSHING OF THE QUARTERBACK (10u & 13u Division ONLY)

- All players that rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage, which will be designated by the rushing puck. Any amount of players can rush the quarterback.
- If the offense draws any rusher to commit or jump that seven-yard marker, if that rusher does not get back behind the 7 yard mark before the ball is snapped, that rusher CANNOT rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back (behind the rushing puck) may still rush.
- **ALL RUSHERS MUST LINE UP ONE YARD ON EITHER SIDE OF THE CENTER** and/or **RUSH PUCK.** THEY CAN NOT LINE UP DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE CENTER OR THEY GIVE UP THEIR "RIGHT OF WAY".
- The rusher has the right of way.
- ***All offensive players must avoid the rusher. If this path is crossed AND contact is made involving the rusher, then an offensive penalty will be assessed.***
- Players not rushing the quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage, as long as he or she does not cross the line of scrimmage prior to the ball being handed off.
- A rusher must go for the quarterback's flags. The rusher may attempt to block the pass, but it is a penalty to make contact with the quarterback.

## DEAD BALL

- A play is ruled dead when: ball carriers flag is pulled, ball carriers flag falls off, ball carrier steps out of bounds, ball carriers knee touches the ground, ball carrier lets the ball hit the ground, ball carrier fumbles the ball, and after a touchdown/extra point is scored.
- **There are no fumbles.** The ball will be spotted where the player loses control of the ball.
- **A play is ruled dead if the QB passes the ball and it hits the ceiling or wall/net.**
- If there is an inadvertent whistle at any point during a play, the play is dead at that point (replay down).

## THE PENALTIES

- **The half or the game cannot end on an "OFFENSIVE" penalty.**
- All defensive penalties are 5 yards and an automatic first down.
- All offensive penalties are 5 yards and loss of down from the line of scrimmage except for flag guarding, blocking/screening, diving and jumping which will be marked off from the point of infraction.
- On a defensive holding penalty (in any division) the offense will have the choice of taking the play or 5 yards from the Line of Scrimmage and first down.
- Defensive tackling is 5 yards added to the end of the play and first down.
- **Any type of blocking or screening is illegal and will result in a penalty.**
- Extra attempts: If the attempting team throws an interception and commits an infraction after the interception than when the opposing team takes offensive possession of the ball they will get an additional 5 yards from the line of scrimmage. If a flagrant foul or intentional foul occurs on the extra point play the penalty will still be assessed from the line of scrimmage.
- **ALL CALLS BY THE REFEREES ARE FINAL.**
- Games will not end on any accepted live ball defensive penalty.
- Any offensive penalty in their end zone will result in a safety (2 points)
- Players grabbing the offensive player to the point of shorts coming down will receive a flag. (Penalty) take the play or 5 yards from the Line of Scrimmage and 1<sup>st</sup> down.
- Any player "trucking" or deliberately shoving/pushing another player will sit out the remainder of the half.

## THE SCORING AND TIME SITUATIONS

- Scoring: Touchdown = 6 points, Extra point (5 yards) = 1 point, Extra point (12 yards) = 2 points, Safety = 2 points. Interception and scoring touchdown = 6 points; Interception and score on extra point attempt = 1 or 2 points depending on which PAT was attempted.
- If Team A gets a safety on Team B, Team A receives 2pts and possession.
- **There is a 30 second huddle clock which will start once the line of scrimmage is marked.**
- Each team is allowed two timeouts (60 seconds long) per half. You can NOT carry a timeout over into the next half.
- **Games are run with two 15-minute halves (continuous clock) and a 2-minute half time.**
- Referees may stop the clock at their own discretion.

## OVERTIME PROCEDURES

- **There is NO overtime during the Winter Session.**

### The Next Level Athletics Flag Football League Competition Rule

Next Level Athletics Flag Football League is designed for all players of all skill levels to participate in a fun environment of friendly competition. Toward that goal, the Competition Rule has been put in place and is designed to ensure that teams of unequal talent or abilities on a particular game day can continue to participate without subjecting one team to embarrassment by running up the score. Simply put, once your team achieves an 18 point or more lead, coaches MUST switch their playmakers to other positions on the field and use every effort to use remaining players for the skilled/scoring positions.

For example, if your quarterback and running back have scored the majority of points to reach an 18+point lead, you may not simply switch those two players so that your quarterback is now playing running back and your running back is playing quarterback. You must switch out your other players for those that are doing all the scoring.

Should the lead drop below 18 points, you are permitted to "reinstate" your starters to their normal positions, until such time as the lead is equal to, or in excess of 18 points.

Additionally, while on defense in a lopsided game, coaches must use every effort to play all of their players on defense as well.

While not specifically tied to the "18 Point Rule" as on offense, the spirit of the competition would dictate to allow all of the players on a team to play defense as well. Explaining to your more talented players that there will be very competitive games in which some less talented players may not see as much time, these are the games for those players to see more playing time.

## FORFEITURE

- The league makes every effort to be considerate of the players, families, and coaches time by beginning all games at the predetermined time. Delays of a start time may include *but are not limited to* weather, medical emergency impeding the game, or League Administrator discretion.  
With that said, a team forfeits their game if they do not have a minimum of 4 players present and properly dressed (mouthpiece, no metal spikes, no pocketed shorts/pants, no flags, and/or no jersey.) Any team NOT on the field for the Ref's,

“Equipment Check” of the players, 6 minutes after Ref or League Administrator is ready to begin the game, will automatically forfeit their game.

In the spirit of the League this Rule must be observed by all of the coaches and will be strictly enforced by the League pursuant to the Disciplinary Rules.

Next Level Athletics will provide an atmosphere where players, friends and families can feel comfortable enjoying a day of football. Any players, teams, or family members that jeopardize that environment may be asked to leave. NEXT LEVEL ATHLETICS FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE operates under a NO TOLERANCE POLICY.  
All rules are subject to League Administrators discretion.

