



**INTERNATIONAL**

**FLAG FOOTBALL RULES**

**5 on 5 / non-contact**

**2009**

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## Word from the editor

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The rule book 2009 is the first international Flag Football rule book ever. The years before a short summary were in use, but this was not any longer good enough for the level of international games.

The general sense of this work was to develop good and complete rules, but still having a simple game. To keep the rules short and easy to understand on one side and cover the game for coaches and officials on the other side, was an almost impossible thing. I tried to find the right way to get as close as possible to both goals.

There are 3 major changes to former years. The ball will be decisive for forward progress, the enforcement spot will be the spot of foul (with few exceptions) and 10 yard penalties for contact fouls are introduced to stress the factor of non-contact. This should bring more safety to the game and give the officials the opportunity of a hard penalty to keep control of the game without the need of disqualification.

It was a long work to get this book done and I will thank for assistance to:

Jim Briggs (GBR), Christian Freund (GER), Jürgen Gatterbauer (AUT), Nick Inzerello (USA), Magnus Lauesgaard (DEN), Tsutomu Negishi (JPN), Roope Noronen (FIN), John-Åke Palm (SWE), KK Park (KOR), Alexandre Roger (FRA), Guido Schlauri (SUI), Rick Sowieta (CAN), Michael Ulicny (AUT) and Shigeyuki Watanabe (JPN).

Wolfgang Geyer (AUT)

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## Flag Football Rules

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IFAF Flag Football Rules are based on IFAF Tackle Football Rules.

To keep the Flag rules short and simple, a lot of things are not explained. Only important or special things have been determined and ruled. Even so this Flag Football Rules Book will cover everything to play Flag without knowing the Tackle rules. If there is a need for more information (e.g. specifications of ball) you will have to look in the Tackle Rules Book (e.g. R 1-3-1). As a coach or official, you need to understand the Tackle rules too.

**The Football Code is an integral part of the Flag rules.**

**The referee will decide according to the Tackle rules on any ruling which is not covered by this Rule Book.**

**Flag football is non-contact. Blocking, tackling and kicking are not allowed.**

The structure of these rules will follow Tackle Rules, but content and numbering is not corresponding.

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## National Changes

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For national competition games it is possible to change rules as follows:

- R 1-1-1 Field dimensions can be changed due to game site or age. Length (excluding end zones) can be shortened to a minimum of 40 yd (36,60 m), end zones can be shortened to a minimum of 8 yd (7,30 m) and width can be narrowed to a minimum of 20 yd (18, 30 m). Length can be lengthened to a maximum of 60 yd (54,90 m) and width can be widened to a maximum of 30 yd (27,45 m). It is possible either to reduce length and/or end zones and/or width or to extend length (end zones 10 yd) and/or width. It is not possible to reduce length and extend width or reverse.
- R 1-1-1 Minimum field markings are side lines, goal lines and end lines.
- R 1-1-1 Pylons or disk markers are only recommended.
- R 1-1-1 Down indicator is only recommended.
- R 1-1-1 Score board is only recommended.
- R 1-1-1 Team rosters can consist of more than 12 players.
- R 1-1-1 Teams can have players of different sex.
- R 1-1-4 Officials only recommended.
- R 1-2-1 Game balls need not to be leather.
- R 3-2-1 Time can be changed due to competition or age.
- R 3-3-2 Time-Outs can be changed due to competition or age.

**All other rules are conduct rules and may not be altered.**

### Indoor Flag Football

Field dimensions can be changed as big as the game site allows. Marking of field will be made with pylons or disk markers.

**Due to field size you can reduce the series of downs to 3 or delete the middle line (no first down possible).**

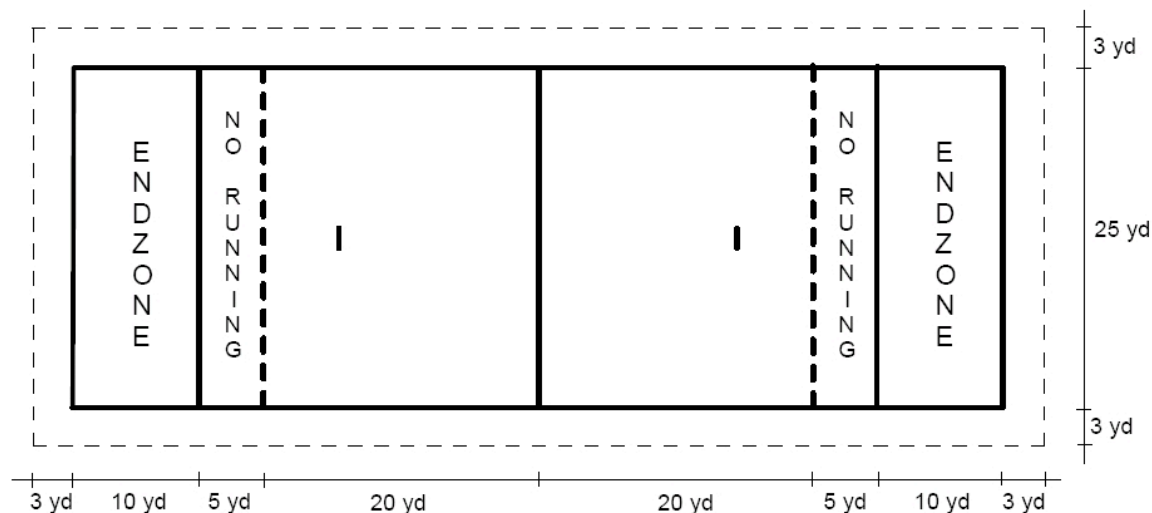
## Diagram of Field

The field shall be a rectangular area with dimensions and lines as indicated in the diagram.

### Field dimensions:

Length 50 yd (45,75 m), additional end zones 10 yd (9,15 m), width 25 yd (22,90 m).

Totally required space for one field is 76 yd (69,55 m) x 31 yd (28,40 m).



Measurements shall be from the inside edges of the lines (goal line is part of end zone), width of lines 4 inches (10 cm). The no-running lines should be dashed. The spot for the 2-point-try should be marked 12 yards (11,00 m) from the goal line in the middle of the width with 1 yard (0,9 m) length.

Safety area is 3 yd (2,75 m) outside the side lines and the end lines. The safety area need not be marked.

If two fields are next to each other the minimum distance in between is 6 yd (5,50 m).

### Field equipment:

Pylons or disk markers shall be placed at the corners of the 8 intersections of the side lines with the goal lines and end lines.

Disk markers can be placed at the intersections of the side lines with the middle line and no-running lines.

A down indicator shall be operated 2 yards outside of one side line.

A visible score board shall be operated near the field.

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**RULE 1****Game, Field, Ball and Equipment**

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**SECTION 1. General Provisions****ARTICLE 1. The Game**

The game shall be played between 2 teams of not more than 5 players each, on a rectangular field and with a regular ball. Details see Diagram of Field.

Team rosters consist of a maximum of 12 players (5 on the field with 7 substitutes). Teams may play with a minimum of 4 players. If less than 4 players are available, the game is forfeited by the side that is unable to field a team.

Teams can have only players of the same sex.

**ARTICLE 2. Winning Team and Final Score**

Each team shall be allowed opportunities to advance the ball across the other team's goal line by running or passing it. The teams shall be awarded points for scoring according to rule and the team having the larger score at the end of the game, including extra periods, shall be the winning team.

**ARTICLE 3. Supervision**

The game shall be played under the supervision of 2 or more officials.

**ARTICLE 4. Team Captains**

Each team shall designate to the referee no more than 2 players as its field captains and no more than 2 coaches.

**SECTION 2. The Ball****ARTICLE 1. Specifications**

The ball shall be made of leather, new or nearly new with regular size, weight and pressure, no alterations should be made. Each team may use its own legal ball.

**ARTICLE 2. Special Sizes**

For women and U16 games balls youth size (ex. TDY) should be used. Balls need not to be leather.

For U13 games balls junior size (ex. TDJ) should be used. Balls need not to be leather.

**SECTION 3. Equipment****ARTICLE 1. Mandatory Equipment**

Players of opposing teams shall wear jerseys of contrasting colors. If 2 teams are using similar jerseys, the winner of the coin toss has the option which team has to change jerseys.

- a. Players of a team shall wear jerseys of the same color and design. The jerseys must be full-length and tucked into the pants with contrasting Arabic numerals at least 6 inches (15 cm) in height on back. Jerseys must not be taped or tied in any manner.
- b. Players shall wear shorts or pants of the same color and design without pockets, press studs or clips. Players cannot tape or secure their shorts or pants to meet this regulation.
- c. Tightly fixed flag belts with sockets and 2 flags (pop-flags). Every effort must be made to keep one flag on each hip of the player. These flags by a size of 2 inch (5 cm) x 15 inch (38 cm) must not be altered or cut. The sockets must not be glued or changed in any way and placed to look downwards and outside. The flags must be clearly visible, hang down freely and must not be covered in any way by the player's uniform. The flags have to have different color from the pants. Players caught with manipulated flags, will be ejected from the game.
- d. All players shall wear an intra-oral mouthpiece of a visible color and no part should stick out more than 1 inch (2,5 cm).

**ARTICLE 2. Illegal Equipment**

- a. Shoes detached with cleats longer than 0,5 inch (1,25 cm), sharp pointed as spikes or made of any metallic material.
- b. Any kind of headwear or helmets (caps, hoods, bandanas, headbands or similar).
- c. Glasses not medical prescribed and not made out of nonbreaking material.
- d. Jewelry must be removed or covered up completely.
- e. Uniform attachments [Exceptions: A towel maximum 4 inches (10 cm) by 12 inches (30 cm) worn on the front side of the belt. Hand warmers worn during inclement weather.]
- f. Adhesive material, paint, grease or any other slippery substance applied to equipment or on a player's person, clothing or attachment that affects the ball or an opponent.
- g. Any electronic, mechanical or other signal devices for the purpose of communicating with a coach.

**ARTICLE 3. Coaches' Certification**

Before the game the head coach shall give a roster to the referee and certify that all players have the mandatory equipment and have been informed what constitutes illegal equipment.

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**RULE 2****Definitions**

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**SECTION 1. Areas and Lines****ARTICLE 1. The Field**

The field is the area within the safety area and the space above.

**ARTICLE 2. Field of Play**

The field of play is the area within the boundary lines (side lines and end lines) other than the end zones.

**ARTICLE 3. End Zones**

The end zones are the 10-yard areas at both ends of the field between the end lines and the goal lines.

**ARTICLE 4. No-Running-Zones**

The No-Running-Zones are the 5-yard areas at both ends of the field in front of the goal lines.

**ARTICLE 5. Goal Lines**

Goal lines, one for each team, shall be established at opposite ends of the field of play. The goal lines and goal line pylons are in the end zone. Each goal line is part of a vertical plane separating an end zone from the field of play when the ball is touched or is in player possession, the plane extends beyond the side lines. A team's goal line is the one it is defending.

**ARTICLE 6. Middle Line**

In the middle between the goal lines is a middle line, which determines the line to gain a new series.

**ARTICLE 7. In Bounds, Out of Bounds**

The area enclosed by the side lines and end lines is in bounds and the area surrounding and including the side lines and end lines is out of bounds.

**SECTION 2. Team and Player Designations****ARTICLE 1. Offensive and Defensive Teams**

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

**ARTICLE 2. Snapper**

The snapper is the offense player who snaps the ball.

**ARTICLE 3. Quarterback**

The quarterback is the offense player who receives the snap.

**ARTICLE 4. Passer**

The passer is the offense player who throws a legal pass.

**ARTICLE 5. Runner**

The runner is a player in possession of a live ball.

**ARTICLE 6. Blitzzer**

The blitzzer is a defense player who crosses the scrimmage line while the ball is live and before the quarterback has released the ball.

**ARTICLE 7. Player Out of Bounds**

A player or ball is out of bounds when it touches anything out of bounds.

**ARTICLE 8. Disqualified Player**

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

**SECTION 3. Down, Scrimmage and Play Classification****ARTICLE 1. Down**

A down is a unit of the game that starts with a legal snap after the ball is ready for play and ends when the ball next becomes dead. Between downs is the interval during which the ball is dead. A play is the action between the 2 teams during a down.

**ARTICLE 2. Scrimmage Line**

The scrimmage line for each team, when the ball is ready for play, is the yard line and its vertical plane that passes through the point of the ball nearest its own goal line and extends to the side lines.

**ARTICLE 3. Forward Pass Play**

A legal forward pass play is the interval between the snap and when a legal forward pass beyond the scrimmage line is complete, incomplete or intercepted.

**ARTICLE 4. Running Play**

A running play is any live-ball action other than that during a legal forward pass play.

Passes completed behind the line of scrimmage are allowed and are running plays.

## **SECTION 4. The Ball: Live or Dead**

### **ARTICLE 1. Live Ball**

A live ball is a ball in play. A pass or fumble that has not yet touched the ground is a live ball in flight. A player is in possession, if he is holding or controlling a live ball.

### **ARTICLE 2. Dead Ball**

A dead ball is a ball not in play.

### **ARTICLE 3. When Ball Is Ready for Play**

A dead ball is ready for play when the ball is placed on the ground and the referee blows his whistle.

## **SECTION 5. Forward, Beyond and Forward Progress**

### **ARTICLE 1. Forward, Beyond**

Forward, beyond or in advance of, as related to either team, denotes direction toward the opponent's end line. Converse terms are backward or behind.

### **ARTICLE 2. Forward Progress**

Forward progress is a term indicating the end of advancement by the ball carrier or airborne pass receiver of either team and applies to the position of the most forward point of the ball when it became dead between the end lines by rule.

## **SECTION 6. Spots**

### **ARTICLE 1. Enforcement Spot**

An enforcement spot is the point from which the penalty for a foul is enforced.

### **ARTICLE 2. Dead-Ball Spot**

The dead-ball spot is the point at which the ball becomes dead.

### **ARTICLE 3. Spot of the Foul**

The spot of the foul is the point at which that foul occurs. If out of bounds, it shall be transmitted to the side line. If behind the goal line, the foul is in the end zone.

### **ARTICLE 4. Out-of-Bounds Spot**

The out-of-bounds spot is the point at which the ball becomes dead because of being out of bounds.

## **SECTION 7. Foul, Penalty and Violation**

### **ARTICLE 1. Foul**

A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is prescribed. A flagrant foul is a rule infraction that places an opponent in danger of injury.

### **ARTICLE 2. Penalty**

A penalty is a result imposed by rule against a team that has committed a foul and may include one or more of the following: loss of yardage, loss of down, automatic first down or disqualification. If the penalty involves loss of a down, the down shall count as 1 of the 4 in that series.

### **ARTICLE 3. Violation**

A violation is a rule infraction for which no penalty is prescribed; it does not offset a foul.

### **ARTICLE 4. Loss of a down**

"Loss of a down" is an abbreviation meaning "loss of the right to repeat a down".

## **SECTION 8. Shift, Motion**

### **ARTICLE 1. Shift**

A shift is a simultaneous change of position by 2 or more offensive players after the ball is ready and before the snap.

### **ARTICLE 2. Motion**

A motion is a change of position by one offensive player after the ball is ready and before the snap.

## **SECTION 9. Handoff, Pass, Fumble, Batting and Kicking**

### **ARTICLE 1. Handoff**

Handoff is successfully transferring player possession from one teammate to another without throwing.

### **ARTICLE 2. Pass**

A pass is any intentional act to throw the ball in any direction. A pass continues to be a pass until it is caught or intercepted by a player or the ball becomes dead.

**ARTICLE 3. Fumble**

A fumble is any act other than passing or successful handing that result in loss of player possession.

**ARTICLE 4. Batting**

Batting the ball is intentionally striking it or intentionally changing its direction with the hands or arms.

**ARTICLE 5. Kicking**

Kicking the ball is intentionally striking the ball with the knee, lower leg or foot and is illegal.

**SECTION 10. Passes**

**ARTICLE 1. Forward and Backward Pass**

A forward pass is determined by the point where the ball first strikes anything beyond the spot of the pass. All other passes are backward passes.

A snap becomes a backward pass when the snapper releases the ball, even if it slips from the hand of the snapper.

**ARTICLE 2. Crosses Scrimmage Line**

A legal forward pass has crossed the scrimmage line when it first strikes anything beyond the scrimmage line inbounds.

**ARTICLE 3. Catch, Interception**

A catch is an act of firmly establishing player possession of a live ball in flight. A catch of an opponent's pass or fumble is an interception. A player who leaves his feet to make a catch or interception must have the ball firmly in his possession when he first returns to the ground inbounds with any part of his body.

**ARTICLE 4. Sack**

A sack is a flag pull at the quarterback before he releases the ball.

**SECTION 11. Holding, Blocking, Contact and Tackling**

**ARTICLE 1. Holding**

Holding is grasping an opponent or his equipment and not releasing it immediately.

**ARTICLE 2. Blocking**

Blocking is obstructing an opponent without contact by moving into his way. An offense player moving in the line between a defense player and the runner is blocking. A player standing still (with the right of place) is not blocking, even if he is in between the runner and the opponent.

**ARTICLE 3. Contact**

Contact is touching an opponent with impact. Touching without an effect is no contact.

**ARTICLE 4. Flag Pull**

Flag pull is taking away one or more flags of an opponent with hand(s).

**ARTICLE 5. Flag Guarding**

Flag guarding is an attempt of the runner to avoid a flag pull by using any part of the body or the ball.

**SECTION 12. Jumping, Diving, Spinning**

**ARTICLE 1. Jumping**

Jumping is an attempt of the runner to avoid a flag pull by jumping with one or both feet and leave the ground.

**ARTICLE 2. Diving**

Diving is an attempt of the runner to avoid a flag pull by leaning his upper body forward with or without jumping.

**ARTICLE 3. Spinning**

Spinning is an attempt of the runner to avoid a flag pull by turning his body at the vertical axis. Spinning is legal.

**SECTION 13. Right of Place, Right of Way**

**ARTICLE 1. Right of place**

Right of place is given to a still standing player and opponents have to avoid contact.

**ARTICLE 2. Right of way**

Right of way is given to a moving player and opponents have to avoid contact.

The right of place is more worth than the right of way.



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**RULE 3****Periods and Time**

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**SECTION 1. Start of Each Period****ARTICLE 1. First Half**

3 minutes before the scheduled starting time, the referee shall toss a coin at midfield in presence of the field captains from each team, first designating the field captain of the visiting team to call the coin toss.

The winner of the toss will put the ball in play first by a snap at its own 5 yard line; the loser shall designate which goal line his team will defend.

There are no kickoffs.

**ARTICLE 2. Second Half**

Between the first and second period, the teams shall defend opposite goal lines. The loser of the toss will put the ball in play by a snap at its own 5 yard line.

**ARTICLE 3. Extra Periods**

The tiebreaker system will be used when a game is tied after 2 halves and a winner has to be determined.

- a. After 2 minutes intermission, the referee shall declare which end of the field will be used for the extra downs and toss a coin at midfield as at the beginning of the game.
- b. The winner of the toss shall choose Offense or Defense, with the offense to start each period.
- c. No charged team timeouts will be granted.
- d. An extra period shall consist of 2 series with each team putting the ball in play by a snap at the middle line, except the defense scores during a period other than on the try.
- e. Each team retains the ball during a series until it scores, including extra points (1 or 2), or fails. The ball remains alive after a change of team possession until it is declared dead; the series is ended even if there is a second change of possession.
- f. If after a period (with 2 series) the score is still tied, a new period will be played.
- g. The team scoring the greater number of points during the regulation and extra periods shall be declared the winner.

**ARTICLE 4. Tournament Tie breaker system**

If 2 or more teams in a tournament have the same total percentage (win-tie-loss), the following steps will decide the order of the teams:

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Head to head percentage.             | 4. Total net point differential. |
| 2. Head to head net point differential. | 5. Total gained points.          |
| 3. Head to head gained points.          | 6. Coin toss.                    |

**SECTION 2. Playing Time****ARTICLE 1. Length of Play and Intermission**

The total playing time shall be 40 minutes, divided into 2 halves of 20 minutes each, with 2 minute intermission in between.

**ARTICLE 2. Extension of Periods**

A period shall be extended until a down, free from live-ball fouls, has been played. When a penalty is accepted or offsetting fouls occur during a down in which time expires, the down will be repeated.

No period shall end until the ball is dead and the referee declares the period ended. [S14]

**ARTICLE 3. Timing Devices**

Playing time and 25-Second-Clock shall be kept with a game clock that may be either a stop watch operated by an official or a game clock operated by an assistant under the direction of the appropriate official.

**ARTICLE 4. When Clock Starts**

The game clock shall be started when the ball is legally snapped.

**ARTICLE 5. When Clock Stops**

The game clock shall be stopped when each period ends, for a charged team timeout, for an injury timeout or at referee's discretion.

Within the last 2 minutes of each period the clock will stop when:

1. To award a first down, also after a change of possession.
2. To complete a penalty.
3. A ball or ball carrier goes out of bounds.
4. A pass becomes incomplete.
5. A score is made.
6. A charged timeout is granted.

The game clock shall not run during a try within the last 2 minutes, during an extension of a period or during an extra period.

## **SECTION 3. Timeouts**

### **ARTICLE 1. How Charged**

The referee shall declare a timeout when he suspends play for any reason. Each timeout shall be charged to one of the teams or designated as an official timeout. [S3]

### **ARTICLE 2. Charged Team Timeouts**

An official shall allow a charged team timeout when requested by any coach or inbound player when the ball is dead. Each team is entitled to 2 charged team timeouts during each half; they cannot be carried over to the next period.

### **ARTICLE 3. Injury Timeout**

In the event of an injured player any official may charge an official timeout, provided the player for whom the timeout is taken is removed from the game for at least one down.

### **ARTICLE 4. Length of Timeouts**

A charged team timeout shall not exceed 90 second.

Note: After 60 seconds the referee will notify the teams and declare the ball ready for play (R 3-3-5).

Other timeouts shall be not longer than the referee deems necessary to fulfill the purpose for which they are declared.

### **ARTICLE 5. Referee's Notification**

The referee shall notify both teams 30 seconds before a charged team timeout expires and 5 seconds later shall declare the ball ready for play.

Unless a visual game clock is the official timepiece, the referee also shall inform all coaches when approximately 2 minutes of playing time remain in each half.

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**RULE 4****Live Ball, Dead Ball**

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**SECTION 1. Live Ball - Dead Ball****ARTICLE 1. Dead Ball Becomes Alive**

After a dead ball is ready for play, it becomes a live ball when it is legally snapped. A ball snapped before it is ready for play remains dead.

**ARTICLE 2. Live Ball Becomes Dead**

A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound his whistle when:

- a. The ball or the runner goes out of bounds.
- b. Any part of the runner's body, except his hand or foot, touches the ground.
- c. A runner simulates placing his knee on the ground.
- d. A player becomes in possession of the ball with fewer than 2 flags positioned correctly.
- e. A touchdown, touchback, safety or successful try occurs.
- f. A pass or fumble strikes the ground.
- g. On a delay of pass.
- h. On an illegal kick.

On an inadvertent whistle by an official, the ball becomes dead and the team in possession may elect to put the ball next in play where declared dead or replay the down.

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**RULE 5****Series of Downs**

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**SECTION 1. A Series: Started, Broken, Renewed****ARTICLE 1. When to Award Series**

A series of 4 consecutive scrimmage downs shall be awarded to the team that is next to put the ball in play by a snap at the begin of each period and after a score, safety, touchback or change of team possession. [S8]

A new series shall be awarded to the offense if:

- a. It is the first time of the series in legal possession of the ball on or beyond the middle line when the ball is declared dead. If a penalty brings the ball back behind the middle line, no first down will be awarded again.
- b. If an accepted penalty mandates a first down.

A new series shall be awarded to the defense at her own 5 yard line if, after 4th down, the offense has failed to earn a first down.

A new series shall be awarded to the defense at the dead ball spot after an interception.

**SECTION 2. Down and Possession after a Penalty****ARTICLE 1. Foul Before Change of Team Possession**

If a penalty occurred during a down and before any change of team possession, the ball belongs to the offense and the down shall be repeated, unless the penalty also involves loss of a down, mandates a first down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the middle line.

**ARTICLE 2. Foul After Change of Team Possession**

If a penalty is accepted for a foul incurred during a down after change of team possession, the ball belongs to the team in possession when the foul occurred. The next down shall be a first down.

**ARTICLE 3. Penalty Declined**

If a penalty is declined, the number of the next down shall be whatever it would have been if that foul had not occurred.

**ARTICLE 4. Foul Between Downs**

After a penalty incurred between downs, the number of the next down shall be the same as that established before the foul occurred, unless enforcement for a foul leaves the ball on or beyond the middle line or a penalty mandates a first down.

**ARTICLE 5. Fouls by Both Teams**

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

**RULE 7****Snapping and Passing the Ball****SECTION 1. The Scrimmage****ARTICLE 1. Ball Ready for Play**

a. No player shall put the ball in play before it is ready for play. [S1]

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S19].**

b. The ball shall be put in play within 25 seconds after the referee has declared the ball ready for play.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S21].**

**ARTICLE 2. Starting With a Snap**

The ball shall be put in play by a legal snap in the middle between the side lines.

Before the snap, the long axis of the ball must be at right angles to the scrimmage line.

A legal snap is handing or passing it backward from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous backward motion of the hand or hands and actually leaving the hand or hands in this motion. The snap need not be between the snapper's legs.

After the snapper touches the ball, the snapper may not lift the ball, move it forward or simulate the start.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S19].**

**ARTICLE 3. Offensive Team Requirements**

There is no minimum number of players at the line of scrimmage.

a. After the snapper touches the ball and before the ball is snapped all players must be inbounds and behind their scrimmage line.

b. All players of the offensive team must come to an absolute stop and remain stationary in their positions for at least 1 full second before the ball is snapped or a motion starts.

c. No offensive player shall make a false start or make a movement that simulates the beginning of a play.

d. When the snap starts, one player may be in motion, but not in motion toward his opponent's goal line.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S19].**

e. The quarterback cannot run with the ball past the line of scrimmage, unless he has released the ball and it has been returned to him.

f. When the ball is on or inside the 5-yard line going towards the opponent's end zone (no-running-zone), the offense has to make a forward pass play.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S19].**

g. The quarterback has 7 seconds to throw the ball after receiving the snap. If this limit exceeded the ball becomes dead.

**PENALTY - Loss of down at the scrimmage line [S21 + S9].**

**ARTICLE 4. Defensive Team Requirements**

a. After the snapper touches the ball and before the ball is snapped all players must be inbounds and behind their scrimmage line and no player may touch the ball.

b. No player shall use words or signals that disconcert opponents when they are preparing to put the ball in play.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S18].**

c. At the snap, all blitzers have to be 7 or more yards away from their scrimmage line. All other defensive players have to stay behind their scrimmage line until the ball has been handed off, faked handed off or passed from the quarterback.

**PENALTY - 5 yards, spot of foul is the scrimmage line [S18].**

**ARTICLE 5. Handing the Ball**

An Offense may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage.

a. No player may hand the ball to a teammate except an offense player who is behind his scrimmage line.

b. No snapper may receive a forward handoff.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S19].**

**SECTION 2. Pass and Fumble****ARTICLE 1. Backward pass**

A runner may pass the ball backward at any time, if he is behind his scrimmage line and there was no change of possession.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S35].**

**ARTICLE 2. Complete Pass or Fumble**

Any pass caught by an eligible player and fumbles caught by an opponent are completed and the ball continues in play unless completed in the opponent's end zone.

When a fumble is caught by a teammate, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the fumbling team at the spot of the fumble.

#### **ARTICLE 3. Incomplete Pass or Fumble**

Any pass or fumble is incomplete if the ball touches the ground when not firmly controlled by a player. It also is incomplete when a player leaves his feet and receives the pass but first lands on or outside a boundary line. [S10]

When a forward pass is incomplete, the ball belongs to the passing team at the previous scrimmage line.

When a backward pass or fumble is incomplete, the ball belongs to the fumbling team at the spot of the last possession.

#### **ARTICLE 4. Illegal Touch**

All inbound players (including the quarterback) are eligible to touch, bat or catch a pass or fumble.

No offense player who goes out of bounds by himself during a down shall touch a pass inbounds or while airborne.

If a offense player is forced out of bounds and immediately returns to the field of play, he is still eligible.

**PENALTY - Loss of down at the scrimmage line [S9].**

### **SECTION 3. Forward Pass**

#### **ARTICLE 1. Legal Forward Pass**

A player may make one forward pass during each scrimmage down before team possession changes, provided the pass is thrown from a point behind the scrimmage line.

#### **ARTICLE 2. Illegal Forward Pass**

A forward pass is illegal:

- a. If thrown by an offense player who is beyond the scrimmage line when he releases the ball.
- b. If thrown after a runner has gone beyond the scrimmage line.
- c. If it is the second forward pass by the offense during the same down.
- d. If thrown after team possession has changed during the down.

**PENALTY - 5 yards, also loss of down if by offense before team possession changes [S35 + S9].**

#### **ARTICLE 3. Pass Interference**

Pass interference rules apply only during a down in which a legal forward pass crosses the scrimmage line. Physical contact is required to establish interference.

Pass interference is contact that interferes with an opponent player when the ball is in the air. It is the responsibility of the defensive players to avoid the opponents.

It is not pass interference when 2 or more eligible players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to touch, bat or catch the pass. Eligible players of either team have equal rights to the ball.

**PENALTY - Offense pass interference: 10 yards from the previous scrimmage line and loss of down. [S33 + S9]**

**Defense pass interference: Automatic first down at the spot of foul. [S33 + S8] If the spot of foul is in the end zone of the defense, the ball will be spotted at the 2 yard line.**

Note: Contact on a pass play before the pass has been thrown or if the pass does not cross the scrimmage line, is a contact foul (R 9-2-1).

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**RULE 8**

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**Scoring****SECTION 1. Value of Scores****ARTICLE 1. Scoring Plays**

The point value of scoring plays shall be:

Touchdown - 6 Points [S5]

Successful Try from 5 yd - 1 Point [S5]

Successful Try from 12 yd - 2 Points [S5]

Safety - 2 Points (points awarded to opponent) [S6]

**SECTION 2. Touchdown****ARTICLE 1. How Scored**

A touchdown shall be scored when:

- a. The ball in possession of a runner advancing from the field of play penetrates the opponent's goal line (plane).
- b. A player catches a pass or fumble in the opponent's end zone.

**SECTION 3. Try Down****ARTICLE 1. How Scored**

The points shall be scored according to the point values if the try results in what would be a touchdown or safety.

If the defense scores a touchdown, after a change of possession, the value will be 2 points. If the offense scores a safety, after a change of possession, the value will be 1 point.

**ARTICLE 2. Opportunity to Score**

A try is an extra down with the opportunity for either team to score 1 or 2 points.

- a. The ball shall be put in play by the team that scored a 6-point touchdown. If a touchdown is scored during a down in which time expires, the try shall be attempted.
- b. The try, which is a scrimmage down, begins when the ball is ready for play.
- c. The snap will be midway between the side lines on the opponent's 5-yard (1 point) or 12-yard (2 points) line.
- d. The try ends when either team scores or the ball is dead by rule.
- e. Penalties will require repeating the try or results in a score or end the try.

**ARTICLE 3. Next Play**

After a try, the ball shall be put in play by the opponent at its own 5-yard line.

**SECTION 4. Safety****ARTICLE 1. How Scored**

It is a safety when:

- a. The ball becomes dead behind a goal line, except from a incomplete pass or fumble, and the defending team is responsible for the ball being there.
- b. An accepted penalty for a foul leaves the ball on or behind the offending team's goal line.

**ARTICLE 2. Snap After a Safety**

After a safety, the ball shall be put in play by the scoring team at its own 5-yard line.

**SECTION 5. Touchback****ARTICLE 1. When Declared**

It is a touchback when:

- a. The ball becomes dead behind a goal line, except from a incomplete pass or fumble, and the attacking team is responsible for the ball being there.
- b. A defense player intercepts a pass or fumble and the original momentum carries him into the end zone.

**ARTICLE 2. Snap After a Touchback**

After a touchback, the ball shall be put in play by the defending team at its own 5-yard line.

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**RULE 9****Conduct of Players**

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**SECTION 1. Contact Fouls****ARTICLE 1. Initiating Contact**

- a. No player or coach shall contact an opponent or official.
- b. No player may step, jump or stand on another player.
- c. No player may hold another player.
- d. All players have the right of place. Opponents have to avoid contact.
- e. The runner is in charge to avoid contact with the opponent players.
- f. All offense players have the right of way as long as the ball has been thrown or a runner crosses the scrimmage line.  
Defense players have to avoid contact.
- g. All blitzers have the right of way to the quarterback, if they raise one hand clearly above the head before the snap.

**PENALTY - 10 yards [S38].****ARTICLE 2. Targeting an Opponent**

- a. Even with the right of way no player shall target an opponent and contact him.
- b. No player shall try to take the ball away from the runner.

**PENALTY - 10 yards [S38].****ARTICLE 3. Game Interference**

- a. No substitute or coach may interfere in any way with the ball, a player or an official while the ball is in play.

**PENALTY - 10 yards [S38].**

- b. Participation by 6 or more players is illegal participation.

**PENALTY - 10 yards [S28].****SECTION 2. Noncontact Fouls****ARTICLE 1. Unsportsmanlike Acts**

- a. Use of abusive, threatening or obscene language or gestures, or engage in such acts that provoke ill will or are demeaning.
- b. If a player is neither returning the ball to the next spot nor leaving it near the dead-ball spot.

**PENALTY - 10 yards, administer as a dead-ball foul [S27].****ARTICLE 2. Unfair Acts**

- a. No player shall block an opponent.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S43].**

- b. No player shall jump or dive.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S51].**

- c. No runner shall commit flag guarding.

- d. No player shall pull a flag from an opponent other than the runner or fakes to be the runner.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S52].**

- e. The team area will be outside the safety area and between the no-running lines.

Coaches and substitutes may not be outside the team area.

**PENALTY - 5 yards, administer as dead-ball foul. [S27].**

- f. No player wearing illegal equipment or missing mandatory equipment shall be permitted to play. A player with a bleeding wound must leave the field.

Players have to leave the field immediately after ordered to do so by an official.

**VIOLATION - Charged timeout [S3]. Penalty – 5 Yards, if no timeout left [S21].****SECTION 3. Substitutions****ARTICLE 1. Substitution Procedures**

Any number of legal substitutes for either team may enter the game for replacing a player when the ball is dead.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S19].****SECTION 4. Kicking****ARTICLE 1. Illegal Kicks**

A player shall not kick a ball. This is illegal and a live-ball foul that causes the ball to become dead.

**PENALTY - 5 yards [S19].**

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**RULE 10****Penalty Enforcement**

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**SECTION 1. General****ARTICLE 1. Flagrant Fouls**

A flagrant foul is a foul which endangers a player to injury and requires disqualification. [S47]

**ARTICLE 2. Unfair Tactics**

If a team refuses to play or repeatedly commits fouls that can be penalized only by halving the distance or commit an obviously unfair act not specifically covered by the rules, the referee may take any action he considers equitable, including assessing a penalty, disqualify a player or coach, awarding a score, or suspending or forfeiting the game.

**SECTION 2. Penalties Completed****ARTICLE 1. How and When Completed**

A penalty is completed when it is accepted, declined or canceled. Any penalty may be declined by a team captain or coach, but a disqualified player must leave the game.

When a foul is committed, the penalty shall be completed before the ball is declared ready for play.

Only team captains and coaches may ask the referee questions about rule clarification.

**ARTICLE 2. Simultaneous With Snap**

A foul that occurs simultaneously with a snap is considered as occurring during that down.

**ARTICLE 3. Live-Ball Fouls by the Same Team**

When 2 or more live-ball fouls by the same team are reported to the referee, the referee shall explain the alternative penalties to the field captain of the offended team, who then may elect only one of these penalties.

**ARTICLE 4. Offsetting Fouls**

If live-ball fouls by both teams are reported to the referee, the fouls offset and the down is replayed.

Exceptions:

1. When there is a change of team possession during a down, and the team last gaining possession had not fouled before last gaining possession, it may decline offsetting fouls and thereby retain possession after completion of the penalty for its foul.
2. When a live-ball foul is administered as a dead-ball foul, it does not offset and is enforced in order of occurrence.

**ARTICLE 5. Dead-Ball Fouls**

Penalties for dead-ball fouls are administered separately and in order of occurrence.

**ARTICLE 6. Interval Fouls**

Penalties for fouls that occur between the periods are enforced from the spot of the next series.

**SECTION 3. Enforcement Procedures****ARTICLE 1. Spots**

The enforcement spot for live-ball-fouls is the spot of the foul.

Exceptions:

1. Offense Pass Interference, Illegal Touch and Delay of Passing will be enforced from the previous scrimmage line.
2. Defense fouls behind the scrimmage line will be enforced from previous scrimmage line.
3. Defense fouls behind the end of run will be enforced from the dead-ball-spot.
4. Offense fouls beyond the end of run will be enforced from the dead-ball-spot.

The enforcement spot for dead-ball-fouls is the next scrimmage line.

**ARTICLE 2. Procedures**

For fouls occurring simultaneously with the snap, the spot of foul is the scrimmage line.

For live-ball-fouls behind the goal line, the enforcement spot is the 5-yard line.

Fouls during or after a touchdown or try:

1. Fouls by the nonscoring team during a touchdown, enforced on the try.
2. Fouls after a touchdown and before the ball is ready for play on the try, enforced on the try.
3. Fouls by the nonscoring team during a try, enforced on the next snap.
4. Fouls after a try, enforced on the next snap.

**ARTICLE 3. Half-Distance Enforcement**

No distance penalty, including tries, shall exceed half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line.



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**RULE 11****The Officials Duties**

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**SECTION 1. General Duties****ARTICLE 1. Jurisdiction of Officials**

The officials' jurisdiction begins with the coin toss and ends when the referee declares the score final. [S14]

**ARTICLE 2. Number of Officials**

The game shall be played under the supervision of 2 (R and FJ), 3 (R, LM and FJ) or 4 officials (R, LM, FJ and BJ).

**ARTICLE 3. Responsibilities**

- a. Each official is responsible for knowing the number of the down, granting timeouts, declaring the ball dead, determining scores, using proper signals, and mastering playing rules.
- b. All officials are responsible for decisions involving the application of a rule, its interpretation or enforcement.
- c. Each official shall drop a marker and record each foul he observes.
- d. Each official has specific duties but has equal jurisdiction in matters of judgment.

**ARTICLE 4. Equipment**

Officials shall wear a uniform prescribed in the current Football Officials Manual. A prescribed uniform also includes: a whistle, a marker to designate fouls, a marker to record important field locations, a game card for recording fouls and a down recorder.

**SECTION 2. Referee (R)****ARTICLE 1. Position**

The initial position of the referee is behind and to the side of the offensive backfield.

On 2-men crew, the referee is positioning and working like a Linesman.

**ARTICLE 2. Basic Responsibilities**

- a. The referee has general oversight and control of the game and will conduct a thorough pregame conference for the crew.
- b. The referee inspects the playing enclosure and reports irregularities to game management, coaches and other officials.
- c. The referee is the sole authority for the score, and his decisions upon rules and other matters pertaining to the game are final.
- d. The referee shall indicate that the ball is ready for play after determining the officials are ready and shall direct the clock started on the snap. The referee shall time the 25-second count.
- e. The referee shall notify both head coaches if visual timing devices become inoperative and of any disqualifications.
- f. The referee shall administer penalties, being sure that both captains understand the procedure and outcome.
- g. The referee shall observe the relative position of the ball determine if a new series of downs is awarded.
- h. The referee is responsible for the number of timeouts charged to each team, and shall notify the field captain and coach when that team has used its final timeout of a half.
- i. The referee has jurisdiction over player equipment.
- j. The referee will count the number of offensive players.
- k. After the snap, the referee determines the legality of play behind the scrimmage line around the ball.  
The referee is responsible for coverage of the quarterback.

**SECTION 4. Linesman (LM)****ARTICLE 1. Position**

The initial position of the linesman is on the scrimmage line opposite the press box at the side line.

**ARTICLE 2. Basic Responsibilities**

- a. The linesman is responsible for the operation of the down indicator. He instructs an assistant who operate the down indicators outside the side line opposite the press box. The down indicator marks the football's position.
- b. The linesman will count the number of offensive players.
- c. The linesman has jurisdiction over the scrimmage line.
- d. As the ball passes the scrimmage line on his side of the field, the linesman determines the legality of play around the ball.
- e. The linesman indicates forward progress to the referee and keeps count of the downs.

**SECTION 5. Field Judge (FJ)****ARTICLE 1. Position**

The initial position of the field judge is 7 yards deep on the press-box side of the field at the side line.

**ARTICLE 2. Basic Responsibilities**

- a. The field judge is responsible for timing the game or supervising the game clock operator.
- b. The field judge will count the number of defensive players.
- c. The field judge has jurisdiction over the scrimmage line.
- d. As the ball passes the scrimmage line on his side of the field, the field judge determines legality of play around the ball.
- e. The field judge indicates forward progress to the referee.

**SECTION 8. Back Judge (BJ)**

**ARTICLE 1. Position**

The back judge is positioned approximately 20 to 25 yards beyond the scrimmage line and deeper than the defensive backfield.

**ARTICLE 2. Basic Responsibilities**

- a. The back judge (on 4-men-crew) is responsible for timing the game or supervising the game clock operator.
- b. The back judge will count the number of defensive players.
- c. The back judge observes receivers on deep routes and is ruling on long passes and the status of the ball in his area.

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## Summary of Penalties

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**LEGEND:** “O” refers to official’s signal number; “R-S-A” is the rule, section and article number.

	O	R-S-A
<b>AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN (AFD)</b>		
Defense pass interference (at the spot of foul) .....	33	7-3-3
<b>LOSS OF A DOWN (LOD)</b>		
Delay of pass .....	21	7-1-3
Illegal touch .....	9	7-2-4
Illegal forward pass [also 5 yards] .....	35	7-3-2
Offense pass interference [also 10 yards] .....	33	7-3-3
<b>LOSS OF 5 YARDS</b>		
Illegal snap .....	19	7-1-1
Delay of game .....	21	7-1-1
Illegal snap .....	21	7-1-2
False start .....	19	7-1-3
Encroachment .....	19	7-1-3
Illegal motion .....	19	7-1-3
Illegal run play .....	19	7-1-3
Offside .....	18	7-1-4
Disconcerting signals .....	18	7-1-4
Illegal blitz .....	18	7-1-4
Illegal handoff .....	19	7-1-5
Illegal backward pass .....	35	7-2-1
Illegal forward pass [also LOD] .....	35	7-3-2
Blocking .....	43	9-2-2
Jumping or Diving .....	51	9-2-2
Flag guarding .....	52	9-2-2
Illegal Flag pull .....	52	9-2-2
Side line interference .....	27	9-2-2
Illegal Substitution .....	19	9-3-1
Illegal kick .....	19	9-4-1
<b>LOSS OF 10 YARDS</b>		
Offense Pass interference [also LOD] .....	33	7-3-3
Illegal contact .....	38	9-1-1
Targeting .....	38	9-1-2
Game interference .....	38	9-1-3
Illegal participation .....	28	9-1-3
Unsportsmanlike .....	27	9-2-1
<b>CHARGED TIMEOUT</b>		
Player with wearing illegal equipment not leaving field .....	3	9-3-2
Player with missing mandatory equipment not leaving field .....	3	9-3-2
Player with bleeding wound not leaving field .....	3	9-3-2
<b>LOSS OF HALF DISTANCE</b>		
If distance penalty exceeds half the distance to the goal line .....	-	10-2-3

## Official Flag Football Signals

<p>S 1</p>  <p>Ball ready for play</p>	<p>S 3</p>  <p>Timeout</p>	<p>S 5</p>  <p>Touchdown</p>	<p>S 6</p>  <p>Safety</p>
<p>S 8</p>  <p>First Down</p>	<p>S 9</p>  <p>Loss of down</p>	<p>S 10</p>  <p>Incomplete pass</p>	<p>S 14</p>  <p>End of period</p>
<p>S 18</p>  <p>Offside Defense Illegal Blitz</p>	<p>S 19</p>  <p>False start Illegal procedure</p>	<p>S 21</p>  <p>Delay of game Delay of pass</p>	<p>S 27</p>  <p>Unsportsmanlike conduct</p>
<p>S 28</p>  <p>Illegal participation</p>	<p>S 33</p>  <p>Pass Interference</p>	<p>S 35</p>  <p>Illegal forward pass Illegal backward pass</p>	<p>S 38</p>  <p>Illegal contact</p>
<p>S 43</p>  <p>Illegal block</p>	<p>S 47</p>  <p>Disqualification</p>	<p>S 51</p>  <p>Jumping Diving</p>	<p>S 52</p>  <p>Flag guarding Illegal Flag pull</p>