



7-on-7 Football Rules

2023

Foreword

The rules are revised each year to improve the sport's level of safety and quality of play, and to clarify the meaning and intent of rules where necessary. The principles that govern all rule changes are that they must:

- be safe for the participants;
- be applicable at all levels of the sport;
- be coachable;
- be administrable by the officials;
- maintain a balance between offense and defense;
- be interesting to spectators;
- not have a prohibitive economic impact; and
- not be unduly divergent from the rules adopted by IFAF and NCAA in the USA.

These rules apply to all contests involving BAFA affiliated teams and take effect from 1st March 2023 (Exception: Competitions that began before 1st March 2023 will continue to use 2022 rules until the end of their competition).

BAFA has established a Rules Committee to discuss and decide future changes to this book. The Committee is also our liaison to IFAF on rules matters. You may make suggestions for changes at any time, but to be eligible for consideration for the following year they must be received by 31st August.

Dr Jim Briggs, BAFRA (Editor) on behalf of the BAFA Rules Committee

Those who find it necessary to write to the editor for interpretations of rules or play situations will receive prompt replies if they number their questions and email them to rules@britishamericanfootball.org

General Principle

ARTICLE 1. 7-on-7 football shall be played under the rules of 11-a-side contact football with the following changes. Where a rule is in conflict with 11-a-side rules or clearly does not apply, the 7-on-7 rule takes precedence.

The Game

ARTICLE 2. a. The game shall be played between two teams of no more than 7 players each. The minimum number of players in a squad and the number of those permitted to be in uniform shall be determined by the competition authority. **Exception: A competition minimum only needs to be met at the scheduled kickoff time; thereafter the minimum is 7.**

b. A team may legally play with fewer than 7 players, but a foul for an illegal formation occurs if the following requirements are not met:

1. Team A must have at least three players wearing jerseys numbered 50 through 79 legally positioned on their scrimmage line when the snap starts;
2. One other Team A player may (if desired) be in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap;
3. No eligible Team A player may be positioned between any two ineligible players;
4. There are no restrictions on all other Team A players, providing that they are on their side of the neutral zone;
5. Team B players are not restricted by position, providing that they are on their side of the neutral zone.

c. All 11-a-side rules relating to breaking the huddle, substitutions and illegal participation apply with the relevant "7/more than 7/less than 7" substituted in place of "11/more than 11/less than 11" as appropriate.

Supervision

ARTICLE 3. The game shall be played under the supervision of 3, 4 or 5 officials. The officials shall use the officiating mechanics as specified in the current edition of the Manual of Football Officiating, published by IAFOA. On a crew of 3, the officials shall use the normal positions for the Referee, Head Linesman and Line Judge.

The Field

ARTICLE 4. a. The field of play (area between the goal lines) shall be a rectangular area of length 50 yards and width 35 yards. So long as the field remains a rectangular area, competitions may:

(i) permit fields to be shortened by up to 10 yards if necessary to fit in the playing enclosure.

b. The end zones shall be 10 yards. This may be varied to a minimum of 8 yards if necessary to fit into the playing enclosure.

c. The goal line, the end lines, the sidelines and the midfield line are the only lines permitted on the field.

d. Two sets of hash marks 10 yards apart are recommended. If no hash marks are present, all snaps will occur from the centre of the field.

e. 24 inch lines positioned 2 yards from the goal line and 5 yards from the goal line and equidistant from each sideline are recommended.

Goals

ARTICLE 5. There shall be no goal posts.

Line to Gain

ARTICLE 6. There shall be no line to gain indicators. The use of a down box is recommended.

The Ball

ARTICLE 7. The ball shall be that mandated by the competition authority and shall be appropriate for the participants of the competing teams. Teams may use their own footballs when they are in possession, provided they are legal. Ball persons are not required.

Kicks

ARTICLE 8. There shall be no kicking of the football. If the ball is punted, place-kicked or drop-kicked, it is dead. If a loose ball is kicked it remains live.

Game Clock

ARTICLE 9. The game clock is any device under the direction of the appropriate official used to time the duration of the game.

Play Clock

ARTICLE 10. The play clock is any device under the direction of the appropriate official used to time the 40/25 seconds between end of the previous play or the ready-for-play signal and the ball being put in play.

Start of each Half

ARTICLE 11. Each half shall start with a snap from the offensive team's 5-yard line.

- a. Before the game, the Referee shall toss a coin at midfield, in the presence of not more than two captains from each team and another game official, first designating the captain of the visiting team to call the coin toss.
- b. The winner of the coin toss has one of the following choices.
 1. Start the first half OR second half on offense (not both).
 2. Which end of the field they will defend.
- c. The losing captain will make their choice from the remaining option.
- d. The second half will start with teams defending opposite goal lines.

Playing time

ARTICLE 12. a. The maximum total playing time (excluding extra periods) shall be 40 minutes divided into two halves of 20 minutes each. The half-time interval shall be 5 minutes.

Competitions may adopt regulations to reduce the maximum playing time provided the two halves are of equal length.

- b. The clock shall start on the first snap of the game.
- c. Outside the last two minutes of a half, the clock shall normally only be stopped for charged team timeouts, penalty enforcement, and changes of possession. The clock shall continue to run after a scoring play until the try down has been completed. The Referee shall declare and charge himself/herself with a timeout if an injured player requires one. The Referee may also declare and charge himself/herself with a timeout if a delay of game foul is committed or for any contingency not elsewhere covered by the rules.
- d. After a charged team timeout, change of possession or Referee's timeout after a delay of game foul the clock starts on the snap. After any other timeout, the clock starts on the ready-for-play signal.
- e. When the ball is dead and two minutes or less remain in a period, the Referee shall order the clock stopped (if necessary) to inform the Head Coach and field captain of each team. The play clock may be interrupted to give the two-minute warning. The game clock shall start on the snap.
- f. After the two-minute warning, normal game timing rules apply. Refer to Rule 3.
- g. Competition authorities may adopt regulations for either normal game timing or a running clock (as defined in (a) to (e) above) for the entirety of the game. In either case, the Referee shall still issue the two-minute warning.

Timeouts

ARTICLE 13. Each team is entitled to two charged team timeouts during each half. During extra periods, each team shall have one charged timeout per period. Charged timeouts may not be retained into the succeeding half or extra period.

b. Charged timeouts shall last no more than 60 seconds.

Putting the ball in Play

ARTICLE 14. The officials shall make the ball ready for play consistently throughout the game. The play clock will start its countdown from either 40 seconds or 25 seconds, by rule depending on circumstances. A foul for illegal delay occurs if the play clock is at :00 before the ball is put in play.

PENALTY -

Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot.

a. 40-Second Clock.

1. When an official signals that the ball is dead, the play clock shall begin a 40-second count.

2. If the 40-second clock does not start or the count is interrupted for reasons beyond the control of the officials or the play-clock operator (e.g. clock malfunction), the Referee shall stop the game clock and signal (both palms open in an over-the-head pumping motion) that the play clock should be reset at 40 seconds and started immediately.

3. In the event that the 40-second clock is running and the ball is not ready to be snapped after 20 seconds into the count, the Referee shall declare a timeout and signal that the play clock be set at 25 seconds. When play is to be resumed, the Referee will give the ready-for-play signal [S1] and the play clock shall begin the 25-second count. The game clock will start on the snap unless it had been running when the Referee declared a timeout; in that case, it will start on the Referee's signal.

b. 25-Second Clock. If the officials signal the game clock to be stopped for any of the following reasons, the play clock shall be set at 25 seconds. In these circumstances the play clock starts when the Referee declares the ball ready for play:

1. Penalty administration.
2. Charged team timeout.
3. Injury timeout for a player of the offensive team only. The play clock is set to 40 seconds for an injury to a player of the defensive team.
4. Team B is awarded a first down.
5. Start of each half.
6. Start of a team's possession series.
7. Other administrative stoppage.

Downs

ARTICLE 15. Team A has four downs to progress to the midfield line. If successful, they shall have a new series of four downs to score.

a. At the start of a half, the team with the right to start the half takes possession at its own 5-yard line.

b. After a try down, the team that conceded the touchdown takes possession at its own 5-yard line.

c. After a safety, the team that scored the points takes possession at its own 5-yard line.

d. After a touchback, the team awarded the touchback takes possession at its own 5-yard line.

e. After a down in which there is a change of possession, the team in possession at the end of the down starts a new possession series at the succeeding spot.

f. If Team A fails to achieve the line to gain after fourth down with no change of team possession, Team B shall take possession at its own 5-yard line.

Numbering and Formations

ARTICLE 16. a. No two players of the same team shall wear an identical number during any scrimmage down.

b. Team A must have at least three players legally positioned on their scrimmage line wearing jerseys numbered 50 through 79 when the snap starts. One other player may (if desired) be in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap. All Team A players wearing jerseys numbered 1 through 49 or 80 through 99 are eligible. No Team A eligible player may be positioned in between any two Team A ineligible players. There are no other restrictions on the position of the other players, provided they are on their side of the neutral zone.

Forward Passes

ARTICLE 17. Team A may make one forward pass during each down before team possession changes, provided the pass is thrown from a point in or behind the neutral zone. Any Team A player may throw a forward pass.

a. No player shall throw an illegal forward pass as defined by Rule 7-3-2 (Exception: Rule 7-3-2-f does not apply if a running clock is in force).

Scoring

ARTICLE 18. The point value of scoring plays shall be:

Touchdown	6 points
Safety (points awarded to opponents)	2 points
Successful Try Touchdown (from 2-yard line)	1 point
Successful Try Touchdown (from 5-yard line)	2 points
Successful Try Touchdown (scored by Team B)	2 points
Safety during try (point awarded to opponents)	1 point

NOTE: The try will be from the 2-yard line unless the captain or Head Coach of the scoring team informs the Referee that it will be from the 5-yard line. This option must be chosen before the ball is made ready for play.

Personal Fouls

ARTICLE 19. No person subject to the rules shall commit a personal foul before the game, during the game or between periods.

- a. There shall be no clipping at any time. (Exception: Against the runner.)
- b. There shall be no blocking below the waist at any time. (Exception: Against the runner.)

Blocking in the Back

ARTICLE 20. Blocking in the back is permitted as per Rule 9-3-5.

Holding

ARTICLE 21. There shall be no holding at any time. (Exception: Against the runner.)

15-yard Penalties

ARTICLE 22. There are no 15-yard penalties. All penalties that in 11-a-side football carry a 15-yard penalty shall carry a 10-yard penalty in 7-on-7 football.

Penalty Enforcement

ARTICLE 23. Any penalty may be declined. Disqualified players must leave the game. Penalty enforcement shall follow the principles laid down in Rule 10.

Relocated by Penalty

ARTICLE 24. When an accepted penalty moves the ball over a marked line on the field:

- a. If the goal line is the line to gain and enforcement of a Team A penalty moves the ball back across the midfield line, the goal line remains the line to gain.
- b. If the midfield line is the line to gain and enforcement of a Team B penalty moves the ball across the midfield line, the goal line becomes the new line to gain and Team A are awarded a first down by distance.

Enforcement on Try Down

ARTICLE 25. On the try:

a. No accepted penalty shall change the value of the points which may be scored for a successful touchdown by Team A.

Sportsmanship

ARTICLE 26. a. There is no room for any acts of deliberately illegal tactics or blocking, "cheap shots" or any unsportsmanlike act by a player or coach. Foul play will not be tolerated. A player who persistently or flagrantly commits personal fouls shall be disqualified.

PENALTY -

Players or squad members in uniform who commit persistent personal fouls or one flagrant personal foul shall be disqualified.

b. "Trash talking" (any talking which is deemed offensive, insulting or abusive to officials, opposing players, teams or spectators) or any other act of unsportsmanlike conduct is strongly discouraged. The officials are the sole arbiters of language or gestures that is offensive, insulting or abusive.

PENALTY -

10 yards from the succeeding spot. Players or squad members in uniform who commit two unsportsmanlike fouls or one flagrant unsportsmanlike foul shall be disqualified. Coaches who sanction the use of unfair tactics, or who violate these sportsmanship rules, shall be disqualified.

c. Any person disqualified from a game will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Any person subject to the rules may be disqualified and may not participate further in the game in any official capacity.

Rosters

ARTICLE 27. Both teams shall submit roster forms for any game they play in, subject to the regulations of the competition. A common roster for games played in a tournament format is acceptable if allowed by competition regulations. The roster must clearly state the names and (where required) registration numbers of all team coaches, and indicate who is the Head Coach. A player may appear on the roster under more than one jersey number to enable the player to change number during the game (informing the Referee when they do so). Persons subject to the rules who are required to appear on the roster form and do not shall be disqualified upon discovery.

PENALTY -

Disqualification.

Extra Periods

ARTICLE 28. If the score is tied after two periods, competitions may mandate the use of extra periods. If not, the game is over and the result stands as a tie. Extra periods shall be based on the NCAA tiebreaker system detailed in Rule 3-1-3 with the following modifications.

- a. The Referee shall toss a coin at midfield in the presence of no more than two field captains from each team and another game official, first designating the field captain of the visiting team to call the coin toss. The winner of the toss may not defer their choice and shall choose one of the following options:
 1. Offense or defense to start the first series of the first extra period.
 2. Which end of the field shall be used for both series of that extra period.
- b. The loser of the toss shall exercise the remaining option for the first extra period and shall have the first choice of the two options for subsequent even-numbered extra periods.
- c. An extra period shall consist of two series with each team putting the ball in play by a snap from the midfield line.
- d. Each team has four downs to score. The ball remains alive after a change of team possession until it is declared dead and the series is over. Team A may only have a new series of downs if Team B commits a foul that mandates an automatic first down.
- e. Beginning with the second extra period, team scoring a touchdown must attempt a two point try. A one point try by Team A (although not illegal) will not score a point.
- f. Beginning with the third extra period, a team's possession series will be one play for a two-point try from the five-yard line, unless relocated by penalty.
- g. Extra periods will continue to be played until there is a winning team.
- h. The team scoring the greater number of points during the regulation and extra periods shall be declared the winning team.