

AFI High School Flag Football League Rules

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INTRODUCTION: The following rules and regulations are intended to provide for competitive and safe games. Clearly, it would be unrealistic to attempt to include all of the rules of football here. Instead, this document defines the ways in which American Football in Israel ("AFI") High School Flag Football League rules differ from standard International Rules Flag Football, and emphasizes the rules that are different from, or were in question during, previous years.

REGISTRATION: Each team's captain is responsible for registering and updating their team roster and information, in accordance with the rules and league guidelines.

ROSTER: Each team's roster must include 12-15 players. Rosters, including any changes to rosters (addition or removal of players), must be submitted to AFI as specified during the registration process. Only players who have completed the required medical test and insurance procedures and payments are eligible to play. Once a player has been on a team during or after the weekend designated as "Week 3", (as either an active player or a member on the team's roster), they may not join another team. Once the final weekend of regularly scheduled games of the regular season is over no roster changes may be made. Use of an ineligible player is Illegal Procedure, and at the discretion of the referee may also constitute Unsportsmanlike Conduct. Regardless of any consequences upon the game, use of an ineligible player constitutes a serious risk, for which AFI cannot insure itself and which AFI cannot bear. Use of such a player will subject the team to an automatic minimum fine of NIS 1,000. The captain and players of the offending team and the ineligible player, jointly and severally, agree to cover all costs, medical and otherwise, incurred by any party, ensuing from the teams' actions, including use of an ineligible player, as well as the above-mentioned fine and any reasonable disciplinary penalty or fine assessed by the league.

GAME DAY ELIGIBILITY: Each team must declare a maximum of 15 active players, per game day.

Teams may play with a minimum of four players. If a team has less than 4 players available (at the start time or any later time during the game), they forfeit the game. Players may switch teams until week 4 of the official season. If a player plays 1 official game on a single team, he may not switch teams.

AGE LIMIT:

On Sept 1 of the calendar year during which the season starts, players must be under 19 years old.

SCHEDULE: Captains are responsible for monitoring their team schedule. Schedule and bye requests may be submitted only by the captain, at least 10 days prior to the requested date, and are granted subject to logistical considerations.

Post-season format, including any potential changes to game format supplementing those listed below, will be announced separately.

The league Commissioner may approve a larger game day roster than written in this rulebook.

The approval can be given once during a season and is valid for the entire season. Final decisions on all changes and other matters will be held by the director of flag football.

PRIOR TO THE GAME

A coin toss determines first possession. The winner of the coin toss has choice to take possession of the football or to defer. Losers of the coin toss have choice of end zone to defend. In the second half (and, in the case of a scheduled double-header of one-period games, in the second game), the team which defended first takes possession first, and teams switch sides.

GAME CLOCK AND PLAY CLOCK

Games are 25 minutes, (and are usually scheduled in pairs of two 25-minute games). The game clock will not stop during the game, except for during the last minute, and for time outs (see below).

After the ball is spotted, the offense must snap the ball before the end of a 30-second play clock.

GAME CLOCK - FINAL MINUTE:

In the final minute of a game (and, in a game with half-time, in the final minute of each half), the clock will stop, and re-start on the next legal snap, on:

- the first dead-ball opportunity at or within the final minute.
- a first down.
- an incomplete pass.
- a play that ends out of bounds.
- a change of possession.
- a score. However, the clock will restart on the ensuing first down (i.e. it will not run during PAT attempts).
- a penalty (or a declined penalty); however, if committed by a team trailing or tied in the score, in a situation in which the clock would have otherwise run, the clock will re-start immediately after the referee marks the yardage and signals to restart the clock.
- a timeout; however, on an unscheduled official time-out (e.g. for an injury, to make a rules determination, etc.), in a situation in which the clock would have otherwise run, the game clock will restart on the official's signal.

“Kneel-down” Rule: If a team leads by 17 points or more, or has possession of the ball and leads by 9 points or more, at or beyond the one-minute warning of a game, the game is over.

TIMEOUTS

Each team has two 30-second timeout per game (or, in a game with half-time, per half). These cannot be carried over to the second half or overtime. Timeouts can be called by on-field players, and/or the designated captain, only. Following the 30 second time out, the play clock will then begin after the officials ready-to-play signal or announcement, and the game clock will resume after the next snap.

Officials may stop the clock for an official time out, and likewise end such an official time out and re-start the game clock, at their discretion.

SCORING

Touchdown: 6 points.

Extra point: 1 point. (played from midpoint of 5-yard line only)

Extra point: 2 points (played from midpoint of 12-yard line only)

Safety: 2 points.

Note: An Interception returned to opponent's end zone on an extra point play by the defense will result in the defense scoring 2 points plus possession for next series at its 5-yard line.

OVERTIME

During the regular season, a game may end in a tie. During playoffs, in the event of a tied game, overtime will be played. There will be a one-minute official time out preceding the overtime. There will be no time outs granted during the overtime period.

The team winning the coin toss starts with the ball on the midline. Each team has a drive of four downs to attempt to score, after which the other team gets such an attempt. If the score is still tied after each team's drive, both teams receive another drive.

If the score is tied after the teams' second drive, all subsequent drives are one down from the 12-yard line.

There are no extra-points attempts in overtime.

On a turnover of any kind in overtime, the attempt is over, and no points are scored.

OFFENSIVE DRIVES

Possessions begin on the offense's 5-yard line, with the exception of possessions following an interception (see below).

The offensive team has four downs. If a team crosses midfield, it is awarded a new first down.

OFFENSIVE PLAYS

DEFINITIONS:

"Center" - the player who snaps the ball.

Quarterback - the player who receives the snap.

"Pass" - an intentional release of the ball, which then travels forward.

"Lateral" - an intentional release of the ball, which does not travel forward (i.e. is first touched when it is parallel to, or behind, its point of release).

Note that Passes and Laterals are not necessarily defined as underhand or overhand.

PRE-SNAP MOTION: One player may be in motion, but not in motion towards the opponent's end zone, at the snap.

SNAPPING: The ball must be snapped between the legs of the snapper. The center may not take a hand-off back from the quarterback.

HAND-OFFS AND LATERALS: The Offense may use multiple handoffs and laterals, whether or not behind the line of scrimmage. **(Note that this differs from International Rules.)**

RUNNING: Any offensive player with possession of the ball may advance across the line of scrimmage after a hand-off, lateral, or turnover.

JUMPING AND DIVING: The ball-carrier cannot dive or jump to avoid a defensive player or gain yardage.

SPINNING: Spinning is allowed. *(See note on "Blocking by the ball-carrier", below).*

SPOTTING THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE: The line of scrimmage will be spotted where the ball was located when the carrier's flag is pulled.

"NO RUNNING" ZONE: When the line of scrimmage is on or inside the opponent's 5-yard line, the offense cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage except on a play with a forward pass.

PASSING: One forward pass may be thrown per down. The pass may be thrown by any player. Once the ball has been in the possession of a player who is fully beyond the line of scrimmage, or there has been a turnover on the play, passing is not allowed.

All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage).

An airborne receiver who catches the ball will be judged to have received the ball in bounds if both the last part of the receiver's body to become airborne was in bounds, and the first part of the receiver's body to land was in bounds.

SEVEN-SECOND COUNT: The referee will count out seven seconds after the snap. If a pass is not thrown, and the ball is not run across the line of scrimmage or lateraled or handed off, within seven seconds, the play is dead, with a loss of down and the ball is spotted at the previous line of scrimmage.

DEFENSIVE RUSH:

Any number of defensive players can cross the line of scrimmage, provided they are a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. After a hand-off or lateral, or fake hand-off or lateral, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may rush. A special marker, or a game official, will designate seven yards from the line of scrimmage.

TURNOVERS

Interceptions change the possession of the ball, and may be returned by the intercepting team, who will then begin their ensuing drive at the spot of the end of the play.

An interception which is returned to the endzone will count as a Touchdown (followed, as usual, by a PAT attempt by the scoring team, and then a new offensive series for the opposing team).

On interceptions that occur in the defending team's end zone (the end zone they are defending), if the ball is not advanced out of the endzone, the ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line.

Should an interception occur in the end zone and the ball carrier leave the end zone, the ball will belong to the intercepting team at the spot the ball becomes dead. Should the ball carrier return to the end zone and the play become dead in the endzone, except in a case of an inadvertent whistle, or the returning team commit a penalty while the ball is in the endzone, the result is a safety for the opposing team.

An intercepted PAT attempt which is returned to the endzone, or during which interception return a foul which is not offset is committed by the passing team, will count as two points for the intercepting team. Following any intercepted PAT attempt, the intercepting team will begin the ensuing drive on the 5-yard line.

DEAD BALLS:

Play is ruled "dead" when:

- An official blows his whistle.
- Ball carrier is deflagged by an opponent.
- Ball carrier's flag is improperly positioned, and an opponent attempts to deflag him.
- Ball carrier is missing a flag for any reason besides an opponent's pull, and an opponent is close enough to conceivably attempt a pull.
- Points are scored.
- Any part of the ball carrier's body, other than his hand or foot, touches the ground.
- Any part of the ball carrier's body, or the ball, touches out of bounds.
- The ball touches the ground on an incomplete pass, lateral, hand-off or fumble.

Note: There is no possible change of possession on fumbles after they touch the ground. The ball is dead when it touches the ground, and is spotted where the ball left the ball carrier's hand(s). If the ball is fumbled during the snap, the ball will be spotted at the line of scrimmage.

SUBSTITUTIONS: Substitutions may be made only when the ball is dead.

PENALTIES

All penalties are 5 yards, assessed from the line of scrimmage, and the down will be repeated, unless otherwise noted.

All penalties may be declined, except a false start.

Penalties will not exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line from the line of scrimmage.

Game officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.

Only the team captain and Head Coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players and Coaches cannot question judgment calls.

Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.

Penalties after an interception shall be assessed from the spot of the foul (i.e the change of possession will count).

Defensive Penalties:

Offside — 5 yards.

Substitution fouls — 5 yards. (player enters field after ball is ready for play to deceive the opponents, or 6 men on field.)

Disconcerting signals — 5 yards. (signals to distract / simulate offensive signals prior to snap)

Interference with opponent or ball at the snap — 5 yards.

Illegal rushing — 5 yards. (starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)

Pass Interference — spot of the foul and repeat the down. (**Note that this differs from International Rules**).

Illegal contact — 5 yards and automatic first down. (holding, blocking, etc)

Illegal flag pull — 5 yards and automatic first down. (before receiver has ball)

Offensive Penalties:

Flag guarding — play is dead at spot of foul.

Delay of game — 5 yards.

Substitution fouls — 5 yards.

Illegal motion — 5 yards. (more than one person moving, etc.)

False start — 5 yards (cannot be declined).

Illegal snap — 5 yards.

Offensive holding — 5 yards.

Diving/Jumping - 5 yards

Player out of bounds — 5 yards. (if player goes out of bounds, player cannot return to the field and catch ball)

Illegal forward pass — 5 yards and loss of down. (a second forward pass or after ball-carrier has fully crossed the line of scrimmage)

Offensive pass interference — 5 yards and loss of down. (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender)

Running inside the no running zone - loss of down at the previous spot.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct - 10 Yards, and possible ejection at discretion of officials.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct includes, but is not limited to, intentional contact, trash talking or use of offensive language, cheating (attempting to deceive the officials regarding the rules and compliance therewith), and other acts at the discretion of the officials.

A note on Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty: Like all penalties, officials will call this penalty when they plainly see it. And, like all penalties, it is possible for officials to be wrong about this one. Remember that there is a difference between “when they plainly see it”, and “beyond a shadow of a doubt”. So, if you are called for a penalty, you need not be embarrassed or angry - even if you are called for “unsportsmanlike conduct”. If you don’t think you committed the infraction, or if you did it unintentionally, you can simply give a quick apology, or a quick handshake or high-five to your opponent, and move on.

Of course, if you did do it on purpose, then yes, you should be embarrassed... but again, we all make mistakes in life, you can give a somewhat more significant apology, resolve to improve in this respect, and move on.

Illegal procedure - 5 yards.

ATTIRE

No padding shall be allowed.

Cleats are allowed, but must be rubber.

All players must wear a protective mouthpiece; there are no exceptions.

Official team jerseys must be worn during play.

EQUIPMENT

Teams use their own football during the game. The ball must be of standard size (for under-18 leagues, the standard is “Wilson TDY”). Alterations to the natural surface of the ball are prohibited.

Players are not permitted to use adhesive material, paint, grease or any other slippery substance applied to equipment or on a player’s person, clothing or attachments that affects the ball or an opponent (exception: eye shade).

If two teams’s jerseys are deemed similar by the officials, the winner of a coin toss decides who shall change.

Uniforms may not pose an injury risk to any player. Jewelry must be removed or covered up completely and securely, prior to the start of the game.

The referee will have the final decision as to the acceptability of equipment.

Players may wear cleated shoes, but shoes with heels are not acceptable. Spikes or similar sharp pointed type shoes such as track spikes, metal baseball cleats, or golf shoes are not permitted. If cleated shoes are worn, there is no minimum or maximum number of cleats to be worn, but the cleats must be a part of the natural design of the shoe and in good

condition.

If a participant has incurred a wound that is bleeding, or if there is enough blood on a participant, or on the participant's uniform such that it may be transferred to another individual, the participant must leave the playing field until the problem is resolved to the satisfaction of the referee.

Players must not wear shorts or pants that have pockets, press studs or clips of any kind.

Flag belts must have 2 sockets with flags on players' hips. Every effort must be made to keep one flag on each hip. These flags, sockets and belt, must not be altered in any way. The flag belts and flags must be clearly visible and must not be covered in any way by the players' uniform.

The referee will decide on any on-field ruling which is not covered by this Rule Book.