



**OFFICIAL  
5 VS 5  
WOMEN'S FLAG FOOTBALL RULE BOOK**

**Last update: September 2017**

## **THE FLAG FOOTBALL CODE**

Only the highest standards of sportsmanship and conduct are expected of players, coaches and others associated with the game. There is no tolerance for unfair tactics, unsportsmanlike conduct or maneuvers deliberately designed to inflict injury.

## **THE CODE OF ETHICS STATES:**

The Flag Football Code shall be an integral part of this code of ethics and should be carefully read and observed.

To gain an advantage by circumvention or disregard for the rules brands a coach or player as unfit to be associated with flag football.

Rules alone cannot accomplish fair play. Only the continued best efforts by coaches, players, officials and all friends of the game can preserve the high ethical standards set by the game of football.

Therefore, as a guide to players, coaches, officials and others responsible for the welfare of the game, the committee publishes this following code:

## **COACHING ETHICS**

Deliberately teaching players to violate the rules is indefensible. The coaching of intentional holding, feigning injury, interference or intentional roughing will break down rather than aid in the building of character of players. Such instruction is not only unfair to one's opponent but is demoralizing to the players entrusted to a coach's care and has no place in the game.

The following are unethical practices:

\*Changing numbers during the game to deceive the opponent.

\*Using non therapeutic drugs in the game of football. This is not in keeping with the aims and purposes of amateur athletics and is prohibited.

\*Shifting in a way that simulates the start of a play or employing any other unfair tactic for the purpose of drawing one's opponent offside.

This can be construed only as a deliberate attempt to gain an unmerited advantage.

\*Feigning an injury for the purpose of gaining additional, undeserved time for one's team. An injured player must be given full protection under the rules, but feigning injury is dishonest, unsportsmanlike and contrary to the spirit of the rules. Such tactics cannot be tolerated among sportsmen of integrity.

\*Kicking over sized slick footballs to your opponents with the sole purpose of making it difficult to handle properly.

## **TALKING TO OFFICIALS**

When an official imposes a penalty or makes a decision, he/she simply is doing their duty as they see it. They are on the field to uphold the integrity of the game of flag football, and their decisions are final and conclusive and should be accepted by players and coaches. For a

coach to address, or permit anyone on the bench to address, uncomplimentary remarks to any official during the progress of a game, or to indulge in conduct that might incite players and spectators against the officials, is a violation of the rules of the game and must likewise be considered conduct unworthy of a member of the coaching profession. **Only the team captain and/or Head Coach may call into question a call to the referee or about rule clarification and/or interpretations. Players cannot question referee calls.**

### **CONTACT**

THIS SPORT IS NOT AN INTENTIONAL CONTACT SPORT. BLOCKING AND TACKLING ARE NOT ALLOWED. Any intentional contact or an attempt of it is unfair play, eliminates skill and does not belong in the game. All coaches and players should thoroughly understand the rules of proper offensive and defensive play. It is important to emphasize the severity of the penalty.

### **REFEREES**

The game shall be played under the supervision one referee during the season and two referees during playoffs .

\*Note- Referees make the calls they see, not what they think happened. They are doing everything in their power to make sure the game is fair.

### **RULES SUMMARY**

\* A coin toss determines first possession. The winner of the coin toss has choice to be offense or defense. Losers of the coin toss have choice of which end zone to start from.

\* The team that loses the coin toss gets possession at the beginning of the second half starting at its own 10-yard line.

\* There are no kickoffs.

\* The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 10-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 10-yard line. An automatic first down by penalty will overrule the other requirements regarding four plays to make either a first down or score.

\* If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 10-yard line.

\* All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 10-yard line.

### **TEAM PLAYERS**

\* Team can consist only of girls/women ages 12 and older.

\* Each team must declare a maximum of 15 active players, per game day.

\* **Each team in the WAFI league may have on its roster a maximum of three National Flag Team players who were included on the official National Team roster for the most recent past tournament.**

\* **Teams may play with a minimum of four players. If 4 players do not show up to the field, with their belts on, and on the field with their team by 10 minutes past game time they forfeit the first game. They can play their second game as long as they are not late to the field.**

\* If less than 4 players are available, the game is forfeited by the side that is unable to field a team.

Forfeits are scored as a win for the team with enough players with the score of 25 - 0.

\* Players must play in 40% of the seasons games in order to play in the playoffs.

\*No one can substitute a player from another team.

\* 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.

### **TIMING/OVERTIME**

\* Game length is 20 minutes followed by a 2 minute break and a second 20 minute game, both with a one minute warning.

\* The time is running time except the last one minute of each game will be “official timing”. If the ball carrier is out of bounds, the game clock will stop, if a pass is incomplete, the clock will stop – time will NOT stop after every play.

\* Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.

\* During playoffs, in the event of a tied game, overtime will be played. The period between the end of the game and the start of the overtime period will be 2 minutes.

There will be no time outs granted during the overtime period.

\* The team winning the coin toss of an overtime game starts with the ball on the mid line. Each team has 4 attempts to score after which the other team gets 4 attempts from the mid line. If the score is still tied after each team has used their attempts, both teams start again from the mid line and try to score. Extra-points after the score are played as in regulation time. Except when the score is tied after 2 attempts by both teams, they have to play their extra point tries from the 12-yard line. Turnovers end the team’s attempts and can be returned for a score.

\* Each time the ball is spotted the offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball.

\* Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half. These cannot be carried over to the second half or overtime.

\* Timeouts can be called by Head Coach and on field players only.

\* Coaches cannot come onto the field unless they call for a time out.

\* Clock will stop for the length of the timeout.

\* Clock will stop to warn teams that there is one minute left to play in each half (no time out is given).

\* The clock will start at the snap after it has been stopped.

### **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 return to opponent’s end zone on any extra point play by the defense will result in the defense scoring 2 points plus possession for next series at its 10-yard line.

Mercy rule: If a team is up by 25 points or more at the one minute warning the game can end with the score being the actual score not 25-0.

### **RUNNING**

\* To start the play, the ball can be snapped between the legs of the snapper or not.

\* The center is the player who gives the ball to the quarterback via a snap.

The center cannot take a direct hand off back from the quarterback (no center sneak play).

\* The quarterback is the player who receives the ball directly from the center.

- \* The quarterback cannot run with the ball past the line of scrimmage, unless he has handed the ball off, tossed or pitched, and it has been returned to him.
- \* An offense may use multiple hand offs behind the line of scrimmage. Only backward & lateral hand offs are allowed during the down.
- \* Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed and are running plays.
- \* Once the ball carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage the ball cannot be handed off, tossed, pitched or passed in any way.
- \* "No-running zones," are located 5 yards in front of each end zone. When the ball is on or inside the 5-yard line going towards the opponent's end zone, the offense cannot run.
- \* The player who takes a hand off, lateral or backwards toss or pitch, can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- \* All defensive players are eligible to rush once the ball has been handed off or tossed, or there is a play action fake or fake hand off.
- \* Spinning is allowed, but the ball carrier cannot dive forward or jump to avoid a defensive player to gain yardage and can't make contact with the player.
- \* The line of scrimmage will be spotted where the ball was located when the carrier's flag is pulled or fell out of the belt.

### **RECEIVING**

- \* All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off or tossed behind the line of scrimmage).
- \* Once ball is set, one player may be in motion, but not in motion towards the opponent's end zone at the snap.
- \* A player must have at least the first body part in bounds, when landing after making a reception, with total possession of the ball, in order to be a fair catch.

### **PASSING**

- \* Only players starting 7 yards from the line of scrimmage can rush the passer.
- \* The quarterback has seven seconds to throw the ball. If a pass is not thrown within seven seconds, the play is dead, with a loss of down and the ball is spotted at the previous line of scrimmage.
- \* Only one forward pass thrown from behind the line of scrimmage is allowed in a down.
- \* Interceptions change the possession of the ball.
- \* Interceptions can be returned by the defense.
- \* On interceptions that occur and remain in the end zone, the ball will become dead and will result in the ball belonging to the intercepting team at its 10-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. However should the ball carrier return to the end zone and be deflagged or the ball becomes dead, except in a case of premature whistle, the result would be a safety for the other team.

### **DEAD BALLS**

- \* Substitutions may be made only when ball is dead.
- \* When an official blows his whistle.
- \* Ball carrier's flag is pulled or becomes illegal (If a ball carrier's flag falls off while running, or has one flag when they took possession of the ball, the play is down where the players flag fell off or when they received possession of the ball.

- \* Points are scored.
- \* When any part of the ball carrier's body, other than his hand or foot touches the ground.
- \* Note: There are no fumbles. The ball will be spotted where the ball left the ball carrier's hand(s). If the snap is not caught or is picked up by the other team the play is dead and the LOS is the same.

### **RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK**

\*All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.

In order to have a right of way (ROW) the rusher needs to hold up their arm to notify the quarterback and officials that she is rushing. She does not need to hold it up the whole time but she has to know the referee saw her raise her hand. If the rusher does not hold up her hand before snap then she gives up the ROW. If the quarterback changes position (moves in the pocket) the rusher no longer has the ROW.

\* A maximum of 2 players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off or tossed, or there is a play action fake or fake hand off, the seven yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. A special marker, or a game official, will designate seven yards from the line of scrimmage.

### **SPORTSMANSHIP/BLOCKING**

**\*REMEMBER, BLOCKING AND TACKLING ARE NOT ALLOWED.**

\*If the referee witnesses any acts of flagrant contact, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game.

\*Trash talking is illegal. (Trash talk is talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, or spectators.) Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If trash talking occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.

\*A player who intentionally violates a rule is guilty of unfair play and unsportsmanlike conduct; and whether they escape being penalized, they bring discredit to the good name of the game, which is their duty as a player to uphold. Coaches are urged to discuss this conduct frequently and support all officials' actions to control it.

**FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

### **PENALTIES**

\* All penalties are 5 yards from the line of scrimmage.

\* All penalties may be declined, except a false start and penalties regarding players outfits.

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

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

\* Penalties after an interception shall be assessed after the return is over and/or the play is blown dead.

\* Unsportsmanlike conduct results in a penalty of 5 yards with one warning, and 2<sup>nd</sup> offense is ejection from the game.

### **DEFENSIVE PENALTIES**

\* Offsides - 5 yards

\* Substitution fouls -5 yards. (player enters field after ball is blown ready for play)

- \* 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)
- \* Illegal flag pull- 5 yards (before receiver has ball or with the quarterback after she has thrown the ball)
- \* Illegal contact - 5 yards and automatic first down. (holding, blocking, etc) It is the responsibility of defensive players to avoid the opponents.
- \* Pass interference - 5 yards and automatic first down.

### **OFFENSIVE PENALTIES**

- \* Flag guarding -5 yards. You are not allowed to lean forward to get away from someone pulling your flag. Flag guarding includes hands or ball.
- \* Delay of game - 5 yards.
- \* Substitution fouls - 5 yards.
- \* Illegal motion - 5 yards. (more than one person moving behind LOS)
- \* False start -5 yards (cannot be declined).
- \* Illegal snap - 5 yards.
- \* Illegal shift or failure to pause for 1 second -5 yards.
- \* Offensive holding - 5 yards.
- \* Diving/Jumping - 5 yards and loss of down
- \* 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 illegal pass after ball has crossed the line of scrimmage )
- \* Offensive pass interference — 5 yards and loss of down. (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender)
- \* Running inside a no running zone is a loss of down at the previous spot.
- \* Make sure when your teammate catches the ball you are to stop running and remain in place until the referee blows his whistle.
- \* If spinner contacts the defender intentionally with an elbow on their shoulders or head it is considered illegal contact for the runner.
- \* Exceeding the seven seconds to throw the ball is a loss of a down.
- \* Blocking- 5 yards from spot of foul.

### **EQUIPMENT/UNIFORMS**

- \* No padding or head wear shall be allowed.
- \* Cleats are allowed, but must be rubber. Inspections must be made.
- \* All players must wear a protective mouthpiece; there are no exceptions.
- \* Official game jerseys must be worn during play. Players can wear their jerseys over sweat shirts.
- \* Teams may use their own football during the game, or if they agree, one game ball may be used by both teams. Each league or tournament can set its own specifications regarding the dimensions and type of football to be used based on the age and skill of the participants. No team or player is permitted to make alterations to the natural surface of the ball being used. Teams doing so will be penalized five yards for objectionable conduct.
- In Ladies and in U15 competitions, teams are recommended to use ball size Wilson TDY .
- 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). Players who do so will be penalized five yards for objectionable conduct and will be removed from the game until it is removed.

\* If two teams are using similar jerseys, the winner of the coin toss has the option to change shirts.

\* Uniforms cannot contain any equipment that would cause injury to any player.

The referee will be the final authority on equipment that may be injurious to participants or on any equipment or devices that are not covered in the rules.

\* Jewelry must be removed prior to the start of the game. If it is not possible to remove the jewelry it must be covered up completely. Medical bracelets may be worn but they must be fastened securely so as not to cause injury. The referee will have the final decision as to the acceptability of equipment.

\*If a player is wearing unacceptable equipment or shoes, the player must leave the game for at least one play and remove the equipment before returning. If the player returns to the game with the unacceptable equipment, the team will be penalized for objectionable conduct and the player will be ejected.

\* 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 to such an extent 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, pants, or sweatshirts that have pockets, press studs or clips of any kind. You can tape down the pockets before the game.

\* Only flag belts with sockets with 2 flags on players' hips can be used at any sanctioned flag football event. Every effort must be made to keep one flag on each hip. These flags must not be altered or cut, and the sockets must not be glued or changed in any way. Players caught with a tampered belt of flags, will be ejected from the game. They will also face possible further discipline from the AFI committee. The flag belts and flags must be clearly visible and must not be covered in any way by the players' uniform and must not be the same color as her shorts, pants, etc.

\* Shirts must be tucked in.

\*If player has flowy skirts and the opposing team grabs the flag along with the skirt then the play is considered dead as if the flag got pulled. If the opposing team just grabs the skirt without the flag in the same hand then the play is still live and a holding call can be made. This is a discretionary call of the referee and must be upheld.

\* If flags are backwards the play still stands but player must go out of the game to change her belt.

### **FIELD DEMINSIONS**

Length: 60 (or 80) yards

Width: 30 (or 20) yards

End Zones: Maximum 10 yards deep, minimum 7 yards deep.

No Running Zones: These must be marked 5 yards from each goal line.

### **Note**

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