

RULE XIV (A) – YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL

ARTICLE I – ELIGIBILITY

SECTION A – AGE DIVISIONS

1. There are four (4) age divisions for youth football. Participants must be 6 by the age control date: on September 1st, current year.

GIRLS YOUTH	COED YOUTH
8 & Under	8 & Under
10 & Under	10 & Under
12 & Under	12 & Under
14 & Under	14 & Under

2. All team sports allow within district lines for individuals to compete in the nearest or adjoining departments with the following restrictions:
 - a. Home County or Agency has no program.
 - b. Cannot cross district lines.
 - c. Cannot pass over a program to participate in another agency.
 - d. Must participate in the sport program in the host agency.
 - e. Host agencies must endorse participants.
 - f. Participants must be approved by the District Athletic Chair. Once approved, they are legal throughout District and State.
 - g. Host agency must notify the District Athletic Chair with the list and Home County of each crossover participant. The district must forward info to the State Host and Athletic Chair.
3. Youth coaches must be certified by one of the following programs: NYSCA, ACEP, GHSA, USA Football.
4. Any player or coach ejected from a game for unsportsmanlike conduct will be suspended for one game, in addition to the game from which ejected; or, in the case of an individual event within a meet or match, for the duration of that event.

ARTICLE II – REGULATIONS

SECTION A – GOVERNING RULES

1. Games in youth flag football at all levels of play are governed by the current rules and regulations of the GHSA Constitution and By-laws and the NFHS Rulebook with the exceptions as may be found in this manual.
2. Per the “Return to Play Act of 2013,” effective January 1, 2014, all agencies are required to provide concussion education material to all youth participants and their parents. The verification of compliance to this law is affirmed by the signature of the agency director on the GRPA roster.
3. Use of audio or visual recording devices, including a cell phone, is not permitted in changing areas, rest rooms, or locker rooms. The use of audio or visual recording devices is not allowed in resolution of protested matters.

4. Definitions:

- a. **Screen Blocking** – Screen blocking is the legal act of obstructing an opponent's movement without making physical contact. All screen blocking shall be without physical contact by keeping the hands and arms across the chest or behind the back. Players shall not block by interlocking with a teammate. There shall be no moving screens by the offensive players beyond the line of scrimmage. Offensive players beyond the line may set a standing screen (similar to basketball) or may follow the play in the event of a backward lateral pass (pitch).
- b. **Diving** – A runner with the ball is not allowed to dive, but a receiver may jump or dive to catch a pass. Defensive players may jump or dive to defend a pass or to pull a flag.
- c. **Illegal Pass** – One (1) forward pass is allowed per play. An illegal forward pass is called if the passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage, a second forward pass is thrown, or if a forward pitch is attempted past the line of scrimmage. (Penalty is 5 yards from the spot of the foul and Loss of down). Intentional grounding is called if a player attempts a forward pass when there is no player in the area to receive the pass. The pass may be spiked to stop the clock inside of 2 minutes with no penalty.
- d. **Defensive Pass Interference** – Penalty is 10 yards from the previous spot. Automatic first down.
- e. **Offensive Pass Interference** – Penalty is 10 yards from the previous spot and loss of down.
- f. **Neutral Zone** – There will be a 5 yard neutral zone for the 8u & 10u age groups between the offense and defense. A 5 yard neutral zone for the 12u & 14u age groups. No player may cross into the neutral zone before the ball is snapped. The penalty is 5 yards on the offending team.
- g. **Illegal Contact** – Contact that displaces a player from their immediate area or causes the receiver to lose control of the ball. Penalty is 10 yards from the previous spot on the offending team.
- h. **Rushers** -- A rusher in flag football is a defensive player whose main job is to cross the line of scrimmage and pressure the quarterback. They try to stop a pass or pull the quarterback's flag.
 - 8u – No rushing on pass plays. Let the ref and other coaches know you are calling a pass play.
 - 10u – You may have 1 rusher rush the quarterback.
 - 12u – You may have 2 rushers rush the quarterback.
 - 14u – You may have 2 rushers rush the quarterback.

SECTION B – LENGTH OF GAMES AND GAME MANAGEMENT

- 1. The length of the game shall be 40 minutes divided into 4 quarters of 10 minutes each, with a 5 minute halftime. The game will be played using a “running clock”. The clock starts when the ball is legally snapped and will run continuously for the first 18 minutes of each unless there is a timeout or stoppage of play by the officials.
- 2. The game shall be played between 2 teams of (7) players each. Teams may start or finish the game with (6) players.
- 3. Each play will begin with the ball being snapped to the quarterback by the center either through their legs or to the side. The snap may not be a handoff and must be received a minimum of 2-yards behind the line of scrimmage.
- 4. All players are eligible to run the ball after the snap or receive a pass. Only one offensive player may be in motion at the time of the snap.
- 5. Each team shall have (3) timeouts per game and must be requested by the team captain or head coach. Any unused timeouts do not carry over into overtime.
- 6. On or near the 2 minute mark remaining in each half the referee will stop the clock and inform each team of the remaining time and timing changes during the last 2 minutes of each half. The clock will start on the snap following the two-minute warning.
- 7. During the final 2 minutes of each half the clock will stop for the following and resume on the snap of the next play. Incomplete pass, out of bounds, score and extra point attempt, team timeout, fair catch, penalty administration, referee timeout, touchback, and change of possession.
- 8. Playing time may be shortened by mutual agreement of both teams before the game or during halftime.

9. After the coin toss, the game will begin with the offense starting their possession from their own 14-yard line, 1st and line to gain. The offense has (4) downs to cross each 1st down line. There are (4) 20-yard zones. Each time a zone line is crossed the offense is awarded a first down, a touchdown if a team crosses the goal line.
10. Punting - A team may elect to punt the ball when on offense. The captain/coach must inform the referee of the team's selection to punt. All players must remain still until the ball is kicked by the punting team, a snap that hits the ground may be picked up and kicked by the offense. The punt may be picked up from the ground and returned by the receiving team after the kick, if the punt is dropped or touched the ball is dead at the spot.

11. SCORING

- a. Touchdowns shall be (6) points. Extra points shall be either 1, 2, or 3 points.
 - b. Teams have the option to attempt 1 point from the 3 yard line, 2 points from the 10 yard line or 3 points from the 15 yard line following a touchdown. Once the field captain has made the choice for the attempt, the ball will be placed at the requested distance. Once the ball is spotted a team cannot change their mind unless a timeout is taken before the attempt. The defense cannot score on an extra point try. The ball is dead on a change of possession of a PAT attempt.
 - c. A safety shall be 2 points. Following a safety or touchback the ball is spotted on the offense's own 14-yard line, 1st and line to gain.
 - d. Sportsmanship rule - If a team is leading by 19 or more points at the 2 minute mark of the second half, the game is officially finished.
12. For the 8U & 10U divisions only, teams are allowed to have one coach on the field while their team is on offense to help with calling offensive plays. The coach must remain 10 yards behind the offensive line of scrimmage. The on field coach is not allowed to communicate with the team once the team leaves the huddle or the team is at the line of scrimmage. The purpose of this rule is to help with play calls, not to coach kids during live ball play. Penalty- First Offense- Sideline warning/ Second Offense- 5 yard penalty, replay the down and the team loses the ability to have a coach on the playing field for the remainder of the game.
 13. In the event of a tie game at the end of regulation, the "OVERTIME" procedure shall be:
 - a. After a 3-minute intermission a coin-flip with the team captains and the referee shall be conducted in order to determine possession and direction to start the overtime period.
 - b. The winner of the coin-flip shall have the option to start on defense, offense, or direction. The loser of the coin-flip will have the choice of the remaining options.
 - c. Each team is entitled to 1 time-out per overtime period.
 - d. The offensive team (team A) will start from the opponent's 10 yard line and have 4 downs to score a touchdown followed by the opponent (Team B) having the same opportunity to score. If the score is still tied after 1 period of overtime, play will proceed to the 2nd overtime with 1st and goal from Team B's 5 yard line. In the second overtime Team B will be on offense first and Team A on defense. If the score is still tied after the 2nd overtime period, each team shall have one play from the try line of their choice (3, 10, or 15 yard line). The process will continue until a winner is decided. In any overtime period when the defense secures possession, the ball is dead and the series is over. Teams will continue to alternate possession for each overtime period until a winner is determined.
 14. The referee shall have the authority to correct all obvious timing errors, but they must be corrected before the ball becomes live after the error occurred.

ARTICLE III – EQUIPMENT

SECTION A – APPROVED EQUIPMENT

1. Jersey's- The home team shall wear matching dark jerseys with contrasting numbers not less than 6 inches in height in the back. The visiting team shall wear white or light colored jerseys with contrasting numbers not less than 6 inches in height on the back. Jerseys must be able to be tucked in at all times. Note: Referees may send off players who do not conform.
 - a. Approved Uniform: (1) Plain shirts with numbers, (2) agency name or agency abbreviation, or (3) agency logo with department/school mascot name. (Effective January 2025)
2. Coaches and non-player personnel must be attired in a manner that puts GRPA and its member's agencies in a positive light. Tournament Directors, Officials, and GRPA State Athletic Committee members reserve the right to remove those from the contest who do not adhere to the standards set forth by the GRPA State Athletic Committee.
 - a. Managers, coaches, or team scorers must be attired in staff shirts or jerseys that are identical in style and color with each other.
3. Headwear- Players may wear a knit stocking cap, elastic headband, or a cap without a bill. Players are not permitted to wear bandanas. A soft pliable and non-abrasive protective headgear is recommended.
4. Flag Belts- Each player shall wear a one-piece quick release belt, without any knots. The belt must have 3 flags at the waistline permanently attached with 1 flag on each side and 1 in the back. The flag should be of contrasting color to the player's jersey and the opponent's flags.
5. Pants/Shorts- Each player shall wear pants or shorts without pockets or belt loops. They shall be a different color than their flags.
6. Footwear may be turf shoes or rubber molded cleats. Any type of braces with metal must be covered and not exposed.
7. Mouthpieces are mandatory for all players and must cover all teeth.
8. Game Ball - 8u & 10u age groups will use the Pee Wee or K2 football: The 12u & 14u age groups will use the junior size or TDJ ball.
9. Illegal players Equipment penalty: 10 yards.

SECTION B – PLAYING FIELD REQUIREMENTS AND SPECIAL RULES

1. The field dimensions shall be 40 yards wide and 100 yards long. There will be (4) 20 yard zones with (2) 10 yard end zones.
2. An "X" will be placed at the 14 yard line from each end zone which will serve as the starting point for each team's offensive possession after a score, safety, and the start of the 1st and 3rd quarters.
3. There will be a 1 yard long line at the 3 yard line which will serve as the 1 point line for PAT's.
4. There will be a 1 yard long line at the 10 yard line which will serve as the 2 point line for PAT's.
5. There will be a 1 yard line at the 15 yard line which will serve as the 3 point line for PAT's.
6. Each field should have yard markers and each zone line on at least one side of the field with pylons on both sidelines at the goal line and in the corners of each end zone.
7. An official down marker is to be used on the sideline opposite the press box placed at the line to signify which down it is during possessions.

NOTE: An official down marker "the down box" to be used by the team occupying the side opposite of the press-box. (NOTE- schools may use lacrosse lines on the synthetic turf fields)

ARTICLE IV – OFFICIALS AND PARTICIPANTS

SECTION A – GAME OFFICIALS

1. No official who has played during the season in the host's local league may officiate in the District or State tournament.
2. The games shall be regulated under the supervision of (3) GHSA registered contest officials.

- a. Three (3) minutes prior to the start of each game both head coaches, team captains, and the officiating crew shall conduct a pre-game conference. It is the responsibility of each head coach to ensure their players are legally equipped and meet uniform standards. Each team shall designate a speaking captain to appropriately address the officials and request timeouts.

SECTION B – PLAYER AND COACH CONDUCT

1. Non-physical unsportsmanlike acts include but are not limited to; profanity, inappropriate gestures, taunting, disconcerting acts prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with the offensive signals, disrespecting a game referee.
2. Physical unsporting acts include but are not limited to; kicking, striking, attempting to kick or strike an opponent, spiking the ball, illegal participation. NOTE: The penalty for any unsportsmanlike acts is 10 yards and the ejection from the game of the offending player or coach.

ARTICLE V – PROTESTS, APPEALS AND PENALTIES

For more information regarding protests and appeals, see: Rule I, Article IV, Section C-11. For more information on protest committee organization and responsibility, see Rule II, Article I, Section A

Flag guarding - 5 yards from spot of foul	Illegal Motion - 5 yards	Illegal forward pass - 5 yards from the spot (loss of down)
Delay of Game - 5 yards (30 sec play clock)	Offsides - 5 yards	Illegal Contact - 10 yards
Roughing the Passer - 10 yards (automatic 1st down)	Unsportsmanlike Conduct - 10 yards	Pass Interference - 10 yards (automatic 1st down)
Intentional grounding - spot foul and loss of down		

LOCAL / ADDITIONAL RULES

Use this section to add or revise local league rules.

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