

Central Suburban Youth Football League  
Flag Football Rules  
December 2018

I. Basics

- a. Central Suburban Youth Football League (CSYFL) Flag Football is for boys and girls ages 5 through 14 (Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade)
- b. Ages are determined by the player's age as of September 1<sup>st</sup>
- c. Participating programs in CSYFL Flag include the following:
  - i. Evanston
  - ii. Glenbrook South – (Possibly)
  - iii. Kenilworth
  - iv. Northshore Trevians
  - v. Vernon Hills
- d. The League is divided into four divisions:
  - i. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade\* (\*Kindergarteners are eligible to play in this division)
  - ii. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade
  - iii. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade
  - iv. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade
- e. All divisions are travel-focused, with games taking place between participating programs, and teams within a participating program (depending on participation numbers)
- f. There are no weight restrictions in any division
- g. Teams will consist of up to 7 players on the field (Offense: C (eligible receiver), QB, and 5 additional eligible receivers/RBs)
- h. Any IHSA formation is allowed
- i. Volunteer coaches must encourage skill development, concepts, and fun

II. Gameplay

- a. At the start of each game, both coaches and captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine possession. The visiting team shall call the toss
- b. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half
- c. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at the 40-yard line and has four (4) plays to reach the 20-yard line. Once the team crosses the 20-yard line, they have four (4) plays to score a touchdown
- d. If the offense fails to reach the 20-yard line, the ball changes possession and the opposing team starts its own drive on the 40-yard line
- e. If the offense crosses the 20-yard line, but fails to score a touchdown, the ball changes possession and the opposing team starts its own drive on the 40-yard line
- f. All possession changes (including interceptions) start on the offense's 40-yard line
- g. At the start of the second half, possession changes to the team that started the game on defense
- h. There are no kickoffs or punts
- i. All players must be rotated at halftime into a different position and should receive equal playing time across the course of the season
- j. Players can score up to 3 touchdowns during a game. Any additional TDs scored by such a player will be considered a turnover and the ball will be placed at the 20-yard line

III. Overtime Gameplay (Applicable only during playoffs/championship tournament)

- a. At the start of overtime, both coaches and captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine possession. The visiting team shall call the toss
- b. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense.

- c. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at the 20-yard line and has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
- d. If the offense scores on their initial possession, they can choose a one-point conversion from the 5-yard line, or a 2-point conversion from the 12-yard line
  - i. The team that starts on defense then takes possession of the ball at the 20-yard line
    - 1. If they match the opponents' score, an additional overtime period begins
    - 2. If they exceed the opponents' score, the game ends and they win
    - 3. If they fail to match or exceed the opponents' score, they lose
- e. If the offense fails to score a touchdown, the ball changes possession and the opposing team starts its own drive on the 20-yard line.
  - i. If the team that was on defense first scores a touchdown on the ensuing possession, they win the game
  - ii. If they fail to score, the ball changes possession and a second overtime period begins
- f. For each subsequent overtime period, the team that finished on defense in the prior period must start the next period on offense.
- g. If a game reaches a third overtime period, note that all point-after conversions must take place on the 12-yard line.

#### IV. Eligibility

- a. All players' legal guardians must register with their associated CSYFL program, and agree to the online waivers during the registration process
- b. Players must be of appropriate age for their registered division by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the year they are participating
- c. Late roster additions after August 15<sup>th</sup> must be approved by CSYFL program directors
- d. 2 unsportsmanlike conduct penalties in a game – or fists thrown by a player – are automatic disqualifications during a game, with a one additional game suspension mandated by CSYFL
  - i. Participating CSYFL program directors have the authority to implement additional penalties for players in their program
- e. CSYFL Tackle (or Northshore Trevian Tackle) players can register for and play Flag during the same season

#### V. Equipment

- a. Participating CSYFL flag programs provide each player with a team jersey which must be worn during play
- b. All CSYFL flag teams will comply with uniform guidelines, which includes a game jersey with integrated Velcro flag holders stitched into the jersey
- c. Each participating flag program will provide their teams with flags, practice/game balls, and an equipment bag
- d. All teams will use standard-sized footballs during league games:
  - i. K-2: Pee Wee
  - ii. 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>; 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>; 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>: Junior
- e. All players are required to wear a mouth guard. The mouth guard shall be completely in the player's mouth at the start of play
- f. Players must wear shoes. Cleats are encouraged, but cleats may not have exposed metal
- g. Players may tape their arms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed
- h. Players must remove all jewelry
- i. Player's shorts may not have belt loops or pockets. If players to have loops/pockets, they must be taped (with the tape being a different color as their flag)
- j. Players may wear soft-padded or soft-shell helmets (e.g. Rocksolid) during games

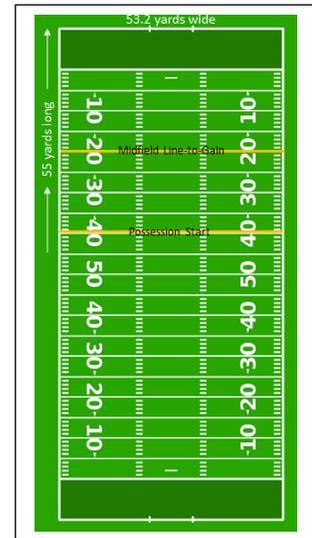
#### VI. Practice Information

- a. Team practices will start two weeks before the first game

- b. There are two practices allowed per week before the season starts, and should stress basic running, throwing, catching, flag pulling, and agility
- c. There is one practice allowed per week after the first game, and is not to exceed 2 hours in length
- d. The head coach will determine the practice day(s), time, and location of practices, and communicate with their teams as appropriate
- e. Each team should have a minimum of two coaches, preferably 3 to help with offense, defense and sideline coaching
- f. We encourage all coaches to encourage a fun and positive experience for all participants

VII. Field

- a. CSYFL flag games will be played on one half of a regulation football field
- b. Field dimensions are 53.3 yards in width, and 55 yards in length (45 yards, plus one 10-yard end zone)
- c. The starting position for each possession is the 40-yard line, with a midfield line-to-gain at the 20-yard line
  - i. For K-2 teams, there is a no-run zone that precedes the midfield line-to-gain by 5 yards, and a no-run zone that precedes the end zone by 5 yards
  - ii. There are no no-run zones for 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade teams



VIII. Rosters

- a. Team rosters must consist of at least seven players, with a maximum of fifteen players
- b. Teams must start a game with a minimum of five players. In the event a team starts a game with fewer than seven players, the opposing team is obligated to play an equal number of players
- c. In the event of injury, a team with insufficient players (fewer than five) may play with four players on the field, but no more than four
- d. Teams are formed by the program directors of CSYFL flag participating teams, and may be modified at their discretion to help ensure parity across their program and within CSYFL
- e. Head coaches are allowed to recruit up to four (4) players, including their own child and other coaches' children, to the team in which they are coaching. Requests will be made during the registration process and are not guaranteed, but will be accommodated in most cases

IX. Coaches

- a. Coaches are volunteer parents or family members helping the players enjoy the game and develop their skills. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all times
- b. Coaches are allowed on the field in CSYFL flag games to direct players according to need. Coaches on the field must not direct players after the snap of the ball
- c. Coaches are expected to adhere to CSYFL flag and participating programs' philosophies, coaching guidelines, and codes of conduct. Failure to do so may result in removal for the season by CSYFL program directors based on their subjective judgement

X. Time

- a. Games are played on a continuous clock with two twenty-minute halves
- b. During the first half of any CSYFL flag game, the clock stops only for timeouts
- c. Halftime is five minutes long
- d. During the second half of any CSYFL flag game, modified timing will occur:
  - i. During the first 18 minutes will be continuous time and will only stop for timeouts
  - ii. During the final two (2) minutes, play will stop for incomplete passes, running out of bounds, touchdowns and resulting conversions, and changes in possession
- e. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball
  - i. At fifteen (15) seconds, the line judge (official) will raise his/her hand
  - ii. At ten (10) seconds, the line judge will count down the play clock to zero
  - iii. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced

- f. Each team has one 60-second timeout per half. Timeouts can not be saved and moved from the first half to the second half
- g. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion (e.g. player is struggling to re-attach their flag, or other equipment issue)
- h. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play
- i. FINAL PLAY OF EACH HALF: If there are 30 seconds or fewer remaining in a half and the ball is spotted by the officials before the game clock expires, the offensive team will have a full 30 seconds to run a final play.

#### XI. Scoring

- a. Touchdown: 6 points
- b. PAT (Point After Touchdown): 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (12-yard line)
  - i. The PAT can be a run or pass from either starting line
- c. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion or a 2-point conversion. Decisions cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned
- d. Safety: 2 points
  - i. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down/tackled in his/her own end zone (the 45 yard line). They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone
- e. Mercy rule: After a team is leading by 18 or more points, the opposing team will automatically get possession of the ball at the 20-yard line. Coaches of the leading team are strongly encouraged to replace or substitute out their best athletes from the quarterback and running back positions, not rush the passer in the spirit of sportsmanship until the game becomes more competitive or ends.
- f. Interceptions: 1 point. Possession changes, and the ball is placed at the 40-yard line (at the 20-yard line if the defending team is losing by 18 or more points)

#### XII. Live Ball/Dead Ball

- a. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead
- b. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
- c. A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in-bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play
- d. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty
- e. Substitutions for injuries may be made on any dead ball
- f. Any official can whistle the play dead
- g. Play is rules "dead" when:
  - i. The ball hits the ground
  - ii. The ball carrier's flag is pulled
  - iii. The ball carrier steps out of bounds
  - iv. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored
  - v. The ball carrier's knee or arm hits the ground
  - vi. The ball carrier's flag falls out
  - vii. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of two or fewer flags on their uniform
  - viii. The 7 second pass clock expires
  - ix. Inadvertent whistle

- x. NOTE: THERE ARE NO FUMBLES. THE BALL IS SPOTTED WHERE THE BALL CARRIER'S FEET WERE AT THE TIME OF THE FUMBLE

- 1. In the event that a snap does not reach the quarterback's hands, the offensive team will have an opportunity to pick up the football and start the play. If the quarterback's flag is pulled or if the ball is picked up/recovered by the defense before the quarterback gains possession of the ball, the play is ruled dead, the down is expired, and the ball is spotted at the point where the ball was recovered/on the ground.

- h. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options: 1) Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down is consumed, or 2) Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage (the clock will stop and it will be an untimed down).
  - i. The team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the correct ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.

### XIII. Running

- a. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot
- b. The quarterback cannot directly run the ball. The quarterback does have the ability to scramble in the backfield but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. The quarterback is the offensive player that receives the snap.
- c. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs
  - i. "Center sneak" play – The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball
- d. Absolutely NO laterals or pitches of any kind
- e. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage
- f. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind, or to the side of the QB, all defensive players are eligible to rush
- g. Runners that intentionally or unintentionally hold or grab their flag while attempting to avoid a flag pull will be considered flag guarding
- h. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding and should be warned, then flagged
  - i. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she had done so to avoid a collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
- i. Spinning is allowed, but players may not leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Jumping in the air in a forward motion to advance the ball, while attempting to avoid a flag pull, is not allowed. Lateral moves to the right or left are permitted
- j. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.
- k. Flag obstruction – All jerseys must be outside a player's pants/shorts (not tucked in) and free from obstruction

### XIV. Blocking/Screening

- a. Offensive players who are not in possession of the football must make all possible effort to stop their motion:
  - i. On a running play, once the ball carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage
  - ii. On a passing play, once the receiver has caught the ball

- b. Offensive players who are not in possession of the football may screen defensive players by assuming an athletic position (protecting for possible impact) so long as they have stopped their motion as defined above
- c. No offensive players who are not in possession of the football may run with the ball carrier after he/she has crossed the line of scrimmage on a run or has caught the ball on a pass play

XV. Passing

- a. All passes must be thrown forward from behind the line of scrimmage
- b. Passes may be received behind the line of scrimmage, but only if it is received as a forward or shovel pass
- c. The quarterback has a 7 second “pass clock”. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds allowed, the play is called dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.
  - i. Once a ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect

XVI. Receiving

- a. All players are eligible to receive passes including the quarterback (if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage)
- b. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage, and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage
- c. A player must have at least one foot in bounds when making a reception
- d. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense
- e. Interceptions change the possession of the ball (the play is blown dead at the time of interception, possession is awarded to the defending team, one point is awarded to the defending team, and the ball is placed at the 40-yard line).
- f. Interceptions on conversions after a touchdown are not returnable. The play is blown dead, no points are awarded to the defense, and the conversion attempt is no good.

XVII. Rushing the Passer

- a. The player who rushes the passer must be a minimum ten (10) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Only 1 player per play can rush the quarterback before the ball leaves the quarterback’s hands. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage
- b. Once the ball is handed off, the ten-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage
- c. A special marker, or the referee, will designate the rush line ten yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify that they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
  - i. A legal rush is:
    1. Any rush from a point ten yards from the line of scrimmage
    2. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
    3. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 10-yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset, and then legally rush the quarterback
    4. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback
  - ii. A penalty may be called if:
    1. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down)
    2. Any defensive player who crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offside (5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down)

3. Any defensive player who crosses the lone of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down)
- iii. Special circumstances:
  1. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, seven second pass clock will remain in effect
  2. Teams are not required to identify their 1 rusher before they play, however, if they do send a rusher, the rusher must verify with the official that they are in the correct starting position 10 yards or greater from the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap
  3. If a rusher leaves the 10-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back and act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced
- d. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass, however NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty
- e. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear line to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the path or line to the QB is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and avoid contact.
- f. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flag is pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when the flag is pulled.
  - i. A 2-point safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone (the 45-yard line). Following a safety, possession changes and the defensive team will take over possession of the football at the 40-yard line

#### XVIII. Flag Pulling

- a. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball
- b. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags
- c. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time
- d. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends
- e. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball
- f. Tackling is considered unnecessary roughness. If a defender tackles an offensive player, the defender is flagged for unnecessary roughness. A second tackling penalty on the same player will result in a penalty and a warning. A third tackling violation will lead to a penalty the player is ejected from the game.
  - i. Tackling occurs if:
    1. A player wraps his/her arms around a player and brings them to the ground
    2. A player pushes the ball carrier out of bounds with no effort toward pulling the player's flag
    3. A player slides or dives in front of a ball carrier and knocks them down in an attempt to stop their progress
- g. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff-arming, dropping the dead, hand arm or shoulder, holding or grabbing the flag belts or pants, or intentionally covering the flag with a part of the uniform (i.e. tucking flag into ones' shorts)

#### XIX. Formations

- a. Offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage and up to five players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off of the line of scrimmage
  - i. One player at a time may go into motion behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage
  - ii. No motion is allowed moving toward the line of scrimmage
- b. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion
- c. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start
- d. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion to a player in the backfield and must completely leave his/her hands. Snapping the ball may be either from between the legs or from the side

XX. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- a. If the league director, field marshal, or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or any unsportsmanlike conduct, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered.
- b. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
- c. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official
- d. Ball carriers MUST make an efforts to avoid defenders with and established position
- e. Defenders are not allowed to run through a ball carrier when pulling flags
- f. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship
  - i. Cheer on your players, but do not harass officials or other teams
  - ii. Keep comments clean and profanity free
  - iii. Complement ALL players, not just one child or team
- g. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly
  - i. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area

XXI. Penalties

- a. General
  - i. The referee will call all penalties
  - ii. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play
  - iii. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (spot fouls)
  - iv. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about the rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question judgement calls
  - v. Games may not end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it
  - vi. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- b. Spot Fouls

| Name   | Type | Penalty Yards       | Penalty Result       |
|--|------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Holding  | Spot | +5 yards            | Automatic first down |
| Defensive Pass Interference                            | Spot | At spot of the foul | Automatic first down |
| Stripping the ball                                     | Spot | +10 yards           | Automatic first down |
| Defensive unnecessary roughness                        | Spot | +10 yards           | Automatic first down |
| Illegal screening, blocking, running with ball carrier | Spot | -5 yards            | Loss of down         |
| Charging   | Spot | -10 yards           | Loss of down         |
| Flag guarding  | Spot | -10 yards           | Loss of down         |
| Offensive unnecessary roughness                        | Spot | -10 yards           | Loss of down         |

c. Defensive Penalties

| Name   | Type      | Penalty Yards       | Penalty Result       |
|--|-----------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Offside  | Dead ball | +5 yards            | Automatic first down |
| Illegal rush (starting from inside 10-yard marker) | Dead ball | +5 yards            | Automatic first down |
| Illegal flag pull                                  | Dead ball | +5 yards            | Automatic first down |
| Roughing the passer                                | Dead ball | +10 yards           | Automatic first down |
| Taunting   | Dead ball | +10 yards           | Automatic first down |
| Defensive pass interference                        | Spot foul | At spot of the foul | Automatic first down |
| Holding  | Spot foul | +5 yards            | Automatic first down |
| Defensive unnecessary roughness                    | Spot foul | +10 yards           | Automatic first down |
| Stripping the ball                                 | Spot foul | +10 yards           | Automatic first down |

d. Offensive Penalties

| Name   | Type      | Penalty Yards | Penalty Result |
|--|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| Offside/false start                                    | Dead ball | -5 yards      | Loss of down   |
| Illegal forward pass (throwing past line LOS)          | Dead ball | -5 yards      | Loss of down   |
| Offensive pass interference                            | Dead ball | -5 yards      | Loss of down   |
| Illegal motion   | Dead ball | -5 yards      | Loss of down   |
| Delay of game  | Dead ball | -5 yards      | Loss of down   |
| Impeding the rusher                                    | Spot foul | -5 yards      | Loss of down   |
| Illegal screening, blocking, running with ball carrier | Spot foul | -5 yards      | Loss of down   |
| Charging   | Spot foul | -10 yards     | Loss of down   |
| Flag guarding  | Spot foul | -10 yards     | Loss of down   |
| Offensive unnecessary roughness                        | Spot foul | -10 yards     | Loss of down   |