

**Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association's**

**Southern Nevada**

# **FLAG FOOTBALL RULES**

**Revised on November 6, 2017**



**The National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) Flag Football Rules, as modified by the Southern Nevada Officials Association (SNOA) are the official rules for all NIAA Southern Nevada regular season games and post-season games.**

# FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

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# NIAA FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

## I. GENERAL RULES:

### a. Game Length:

1. Varsity will play 4 - 15 minute quarters.
2. B and JV will play 4 - 10 minute quarters.
3. Half-time will consist of five (5) minutes.
4. Running clock until last 2 minutes of each half. After the 2-minute warning the clock will stop on incomplete passes or when the runner goes out of bounds. The game clock will start on the snap following the stoppage for notification of 2-minute warning.
5. Each team will have 3 time outs per half, and no carry over from the first half to the second half.

### b. Field:

1. Width: 40 yards
2. Length: 80 yards of field + 2 end zones (10 yards ea)
3. Team Area: 2 yards from each side line and between the 20 yard markers.

### c. Players:

1. Team consists of at least 7 players.
2. Must have at least 7 players to start a game.
3. Minimum of 5 players to play a game.

### d. Equipment:

#### 1. Shoes:

- Must be soft pliable upper material (i.e. canvas/synthetic) that completely covers the foot and is attached to a one-piece molded composite bottom (i.e. tennis shoes).
- Turf Shoe: (No cleats allowed) Molded rubber only (No screw in cleats). NO metal cleats or baseball cleats allowed.

#### 2. Shirts/Jerseys:

- All jerseys must have numbers on front and back. (6 inches in height on the front and 8 inches in height on the back)
- No identical numbers
- Must cover the players' shoulders, chest and back.
- Must be long enough to be tucked into pants.
- ~~Should~~ Must have both a light colored and a dark colored shirt. (home and away)
- Shirt must be tucked in at all times.
- Sweats must be worn under the uniform

#### 3. Shorts/Pants:

- Must be part of a uniform.
- Uniform may be a flag football, soccer or lacrosse uniform.
- No Pockets
- Spandex and compression shorts may be worn under the uniform.
- No torn shorts or sweat pants.
- The pants or shorts must be a contrast color than the flags.

#### 4. Flags:

- A one-piece flag belt (Triple Threat or Flag Tag) without any knots.
- One flag on each side and one in the center of the back. (3 total)
- Triple Threat Belt flag size is 2 ¼ wide by 14 ½ length.
- Flags may not be altered in width or length (No tape).
- All players must be wearing a flag before the ball becomes live.  
Failure to properly wear required player equipment when the ball is about to become live results in a 5-yard penalty for Delay of Game.

**NOTE:** Games will not be played unless both teams have the appropriate flags.

#### 5. Football:

- Pebble grained or rubber covered football.
- Must be a youth or intermediate size football.
- No requirements regarding ball pressure.
- The Wilson GST Composite youth football, stock number WTF1784, will be the official game ball for all post-season games.
- The referee shall be the judge of any ball offered for play.

#### 6. Field Equipment:

- Score board
- Goal post pads
- Sideline markers and pylons
- Down marker (If possible)

#### 7. Additional Equipment:

- Mouth and Tooth Protector: It is **MANDATORY** that all players wear a mouth piece.
- Sunglasses: Players are not permitted to wear sunglasses
- Hand Warmers: Players may not wear hand Warmers that buckle around the waist.
- No head gear is permitted. Knit or stocking cap (beanie) is permissible.

## II. GAME PLAY RULES:

### 1. Offense:

#### ➤ Blocking (at the line of scrimmage):

- Players are allowed to block.
- Blocking must be open-handed with arms extended.
- No shoulder contact.
- NO EXCESSIVE contact will be allowed.

#### ➤ Blocking (Beyond the line of scrimmage):

- Players are allowed to block down field using the following criteria:
  - Blocking must be open-handed with arms extended
  - No shoulder contact
  - NO EXCESSIVE contact between the blocker and defender.

➤ **Passing:**

- The offensive team may NOT throw more than one forward pass per play.
- The offensive team MAY throw an unlimited number of backward passes during any one play.
- The QB cannot throw the ball forward once they have crossed the line of scrimmage (LOS).
- The QB MAY intentionally ground the ball by throwing the ball into the ground or out of bounds to avoid a sack. If the ball is thrown laterally or backwards it is considered a fumble and the ball will be placed at the spot where the ball crossed the out of bounds demarcation or hits the ground. If the pass is thrown forward it is considered an incomplete pass and will be placed at the previous spot.

➤ **Hiking:**

- The ball must be hiked from the ground, but does not have to be hiked between the legs.
- The ball may be hiked to any person at least 2 yards behind the line of scrimmage (LOS).
- The person who receives the snap is considered the quarterback for that series of downs.

➤ **Rushing:**

- ALL players are eligible receivers and running backs.
- NO limit on the number of rushing attempts (BLITZS) by a team.
- Quarterback can run the ball ONCE per SERIES OF DOWN.
- The PAT shall be treated as a new series **(QB is open)**
- No stiff arming
- If a defense “blitzs” or rushes the quarterback may run.

➤ **Receiving:**

- A reception is deemed made if:
  - The receiver possesses the ball before the ball makes contact with the ground.
  - The receiver has at least one foot in the field of play after possessing the ball.
- The receiver may NOT use their hands or arms to move a defender in order to make a reception.
- No stiff arming

**2. Defense:**

➤ **Blocking (at the line of scrimmage):**

- Players are allowed to block.
- Blocking must be open-handed with arms extended
- No shoulder contact
- NO EXCESSIVE contact will be allowed.

➤ **Blocking (Beyond the line of scrimmage):**

- Players are allowed to block down field using the following criteria:
  - Blocking must be open-handed with arms extended
  - No shoulder contact or EXCESSIVE contact between the blocker and defender.
  - No “swim” moves

➤ **Rushing:**

- Players can rush from any position on the field as long as they are 5 yards off the line of scrimmage.
- Teams may only rush two (2) players at a time.

- Rusher must attempt to avoid any blockers/players. NO EXCESSIVE contact is allowed.
- Rusher must avoid hitting the QB arm, even through the follow through motion.
- Rush Blitz: Any defensive player may rush the quarterback as long as they are 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage.

➤ **Pass Defense:**

- Receivers are allowed a free release from the line of scrimmage. NO “Bump and Run” coverage.
- Defenders are not allowed to play through the receiver to make a play on the ball.
- Interceptions occurs if: See “RECEIVING RULES”
- If the defense intercepts a pass, they can return the ball for a touchdown. Wherever the flag is pulled is where the new offense will start their first series of downs.

➤ **De-Flagging/Tackling:**

- When de-flagging the ball carrier:
  - The ball carrier is down at the point when the flag belt comes unclipped, NOT when it falls off.
  - The ball will be spotted using forward progress where the ball is at when the flag comes unclipped, not where the flag may fall.
  - Forward progress is the forward-most point of the ball when de-flagged, if a player is holding the ball out in front of her body, then that’s the dead-ball spot where the ball will next be put into play.

### 3. Kicking:

➤ **Kick-offs:**

- There will be NO kick-offs!
- Teams will take possession of the football on their 20 yard line.

➤ **Punting:**

- There will be NO punts!
- On fourth downs the offensive team must take a time out or declare immediately whether they are punting or going for the first down. **(if time out is declared, decision can be made after time out is exhausted)**
- If the offense declares a punt the defense will take possession of the football on their 20 yard line.
- If the offense goes for the first down and does not obtain it, the defense will take possession of the football at that point on the field.

### 4. Penalties:

➤ **Offense:**

- Illegal Contact:
  - When an offensive player makes excessive contact with a defensive player.
  - 10 yard penalty
  - Any contact other than a legal block.
- False Start:
  - When an offensive player moves before the ball is snapped.
  - 5 yard penalty

- Offensive Pass Interference:
  - When an offensive player hinders a defensive player's ability to catch a pass by making physical contact with the defensive player.
  - 10 yard penalty
- Illegal Forward Pass:
  - When a player past the line of scrimmage throws the ball forward, or when more than one forward pass is thrown during a play.
  - 5 yard penalty from the spot of the infraction, loss of down.
- Illegal Quarterback Run:
  - When the quarterback runs the ball more than once per series of downs
  - 5 yard penalty -
- Illegal Motion:
  - When an offensive player in motion moves towards the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
  - Only one (1) player off of the line of scrimmage is allowed to be moving laterally at the snap of the ball.
  - 5-yard penalty
- Flag Guarding:
  - When a player, either intentionally or accidentally, inhibits a player from de-flagging them by the use of their hands, arms, etc.
  - 10-yard penalty from the spot of the infraction, loss of down.
- Illegal Formation:
  - When the offensive team does not have at least 4 players on the line of scrimmage.
  - 5-yard penalty
- Hurdling / Spinning / Diving:
  - A player may not leave her feet to avoid a flag from being pulled.
  - A player may not spin to avoid a flag from being pulled.
  - The offensive player is deemed to be down at the spot they leave the ground.
  - A player may not leave their feet and dive in any direction to advance the football.
  - 10-yard penalty and loss of down.
- Jumping:
  - Official will blow the whistle and the player will be down at the spot where she left their feet.

➤ **Defense:**

- Illegal Rush:
  - When a defensive player rushes the QB from inside the 5 yard neutral zone.
  - When more than two (2) players rush at a time.
  - 5 yard penalty, repeat down.
- Illegal Contact:
  - When a defensive player makes excessive contact with an offensive player.
  - A player may dive to pull, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling a flag.
  - 10 yard penalty

- **Illegal Flag Pulling:**
  - A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
  - 5 yard penalty, automatic first down.
- **Roughing the Passer:**
  - When a defensive player makes contact with the QB while the QB is in the throwing motion or completing the throwing motion. This includes hitting the QB's arm after they have released the ball.
  - 10 yards - Automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
- **Defensive Pass Interference:**
  - See "Offensive Pass Interference" above.
  - 10 yard penalty
- **Holding:**
  - When a defensive player holds up the offensive player while attempting to de-flag that player.
  - 10 yard penalty
- **Off-Sides:**
  - When a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
  - 5 yard penalty
- **Tackling/Holding:**
  - A player cannot tackle or hold the ball carrier when pulling a flag.
  - 10 yard penalty
- **Sliding:**
  - A player may not slide in an attempt to get the flag.
  - 10 yard penalty

### **III. Coaches and Player Conduct:**

- Coaches and players who disrespectfully object to a game official's call may be assessed an 'unsportsmanlike conduct' penalty.
- No coach, player or substitute shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner once the game officials assume authority for the contest.
- Examples are, but not limited to:
  - Using Profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
  - Attempting to influence a decision by a game official.
  - Disrespectfully addressing a game official.
  - Failures of a head coach, following verification, to have his/her player(s) wear legal and/or required equipment.
  - Being on the field except as a substitute or replaced player.
  - Being outside the team box, but not on the field.

- These actions result in unsportsmanlike penalty enforcement, with a second unsportsmanlike foul resulting in disqualification.
  - An unsportsmanlike penalty will be 10 yards from the spot of the ball at the end of the play (no loss of down). 2<sup>nd</sup> offense will result in the coach or player being ejected for the remainder of the game.
  - Team captains should be the ones to address the officials.
  - Fighting is any attempt by a player or nonplayer to strike or engage a player or nonplayer in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to, attempts to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s) or foot (feet), whether there is contact or not.

#### IV. Scoring:

- Touchdown:
  - 6 points
- **Flag Check:**
  - After all scores the player must go to the nearest official for flag check.
  - **Removing a Flag**
    - Player removing their own flag prior to a flag check will result in no score, loss of down and a warning.
    - Next infraction results in unsportsmanlike penalty.
- **Tampering with a Flag:**
  - If a player is determined to have tampered with their flag it will result in a loss of down and a warning.
    - Next infraction results in disqualification.
- Point After Touchdown:
  - No kick attempts
  - 5 yards = 1 point
  - 10 yards = 2 points
  - During a PAT attempt, the ball remains live, allowing the intercepting team to return the try for 2 points to the other end of the field.
- **Safety:**
  - 2 points

#### Miscellaneous Rules:

- **Mouth and Tooth Protector:**
  - If a player does not have a Mouth and Tooth Protector, the player must be removed for one (1) play.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> offense: Warning. Player must be substituted for one (1) play.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> offense: Player is removed from the game.
- **Series of Downs:**
  - A team in possession of the ball shall have four consecutive downs to advance the ball to the first down cone.
  - Officials will be responsible for determining the spot of the ball and the down markings.
  - A new series of downs will be awarded when a team moves the ball to the next 20 yard line.

- On fourth downs the offensive team must immediately declare to the officials whether they are punting or going for the first down.
  - If the offense declares a punt the defense will take possession of the football on their 20 yard line.
  - If the offense goes for the first down and does not obtain it, the defense will take possession of the football at that point on the field.
- **Play-Clock:**
- The 25 second play clock begins once the ball is placed on the ground and the whistle is blown.
  - Delay of game: If a team exceeds the 25 seconds - 5 yard penalty.
- **Overtime:**
- In the event the 2nd half ends in a tie, **overtime** will commence.
  - A coin toss shall decide who receives the ball first.
  - Winner of the coin toss can choose to be on offense or defense first.
  - Each team will receive one (1) time out per overtime period.
  - Teams will alternate possessions, starting at the 20 yard line. Teams may go for 1 or 2 points after a touchdown is scored.
  - Each team will have at least one possession during each over time. If team A scores first, team B will be given a series of down from their 20 yard line to either tie or win the game.
  - A winner must be determined (No ties).
- **Mercy Rule:**
- If the point deficit is greater than 20 points in the second half a running clock will be utilized.
- **Protest:**
- There are no protests.
  - All referee decisions are final.

## **Flag Football Frequently Asked Questions**

1. How many players can be in motion at once before the ball is snapped?

**Answer: One**

2. Is there a 25 second play clock? If so, when does it start?

**Answer: Yes, once the ball is placed on the ground and the whistle is blown. The officials will track the time.**

3. Are players allowed to block?

**Answer: Yes, players are allowed to block. Blocks must be open-handed with extended arms. Officials will call penalties for excessive contact.**

4. Is spinning to avoid your flag from being pulled allowed?

**Answer: No!**

5. Are rubber cleats acceptable?

**Answer: Yes, rubber cleats are acceptable. No metal cleats.**

6. Does overtime just keep going until a team wins?

**Answer: Yes! Both teams must have the same number of opportunities.**

7. Are blockers allowed to block down field?

**Answer: Yes! All blocks must be open-handed with extended arms.**

8. Should the field be marked every 10 yards or every 20 yards?

**Answer: The field should be marked every 20 yards.**

9. Do teams get to choose which point after a touchdown (PAT) they will attempt?

**Answer: Yes, teams may choose 1 point from the 5 yard line or 2 points from the 10 yard line.**

10. Will the clock stop the last two minutes of the second half, if the point deficit is greater than 20 points?

**Answer: No, the clock will not stop if the point deficit is greater than 20 points (Mercy Rule).**

11. Does the defense line up 1 yard from the line of scrimmage (LOS) or 5 yards?

**Answer: The defense should line up on the line of scrimmage (LOS) unless you are a rusher.**

12. If defensive players can only rush from 5 yards back can you have others on the LOS?

**Answer: Yes.**

13. Is a first down 10 yards or 20 yards?

**Answer: A first down is 20 yards. Officials will determine first down.**

14. The rules state that the quarterback can only run once a series. Can other players run more than once?

**Answer: The quarterback can only run once per series of downs. There is no limit on the number of times other players can run.**

15. Can a player in motion receive the snap?

**Answer: Yes, as long as they are a minimum of 2 yards deep.**

16. How many players can rush at one time?

**Answer: Only two players can rush at one time.**

17. Quarterback can run the ball ONCE per SERIES OF DOWNS. What determines a series of downs?

**Answer: The possession starts from the first play of the series that the offense has the ball until the very last play of the series that the offense has the ball.**

18. Does the ball become dead when any part of the football touches the ground?

**Answer: Yes, when any part of the football touches the ground, either on a fumble or pass, the official will whistle the play over immediately.**

19. Can the offense have more than 4 players on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball?

**Answer: Yes, the offense may have as many players that they want on the line of scrimmage at the snap. There must be a minimum of at least 4 players on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball.**

20. Can a player jump forward, backwards or laterally to avoid having their flag pulled?

**Answer: No, as soon as a player leaves their feet in order from having their flag pulled, the official will blow the whistle and the player will be down at the spot where she left their feet.**

21. If the defense intercepts a pass, and on the return the flag is pulled, where will the new offensive team start their new possession?

**Answer: If the flag is pulled between the 1<sup>st</sup> down cones on the interception return, the offense will start their new possession at the spot the flag was pulled. This may mean that the new offensive team may have less than 20 yards to get a first down as the flag was pulled between the first down cones. Example: The offense would then have 1<sup>st</sup> and 5, 10, 15, etc.....**

## Girl's Flag Football

### Table of Game Clock Times

PERIOD of TIMING	CLOCK TIME
Game Clock (Varsity)	4 – 15 minute quarters
Halftime Intermission	5 minutes
Charged Time-outs	1 minute
Game Clock (JV & B)	4 – 10 minute quarters
Halftime Intermission	5 minutes
Charged Time-outs	1 minute

## STARTING & STOPPING the CLOCK

The clock shall start with the first legal snap of the game and will remain running until the last 2:00 minutes of each half. If there is a penalty administration discussion that occurs prior to the last 2:00 minutes of each half, the clock shall be stopped during the discussion and will then start with the ready-for-play signal.

## 2:00 MINUTE TIMING RULES

The clock shall start with the snap, if the clock was stopped because:

- Issue the 2:00 minute warning.
- The ball goes out of bounds.
- B is awarded a new series.
- Touchdown or Safety is scored.
- Legal or Illegal forward pass is incomplete.
- A request for time-out is granted.
- The penalty for delay of game foul is accepted.

**NOTE:** The clock shall start with the ready-for-play whistle after issuing the 2:00 minute warning if the point deficit is greater than 20 points in the second half.

The clock shall be stopped and will start for the ready-for-play signal on a down if the clock was stopped for any reason other than specified above or untimed down:

- For official's time-out, other than when B is awarded a new series.
- Penalty administration.
- There has been no charged time-out.
- First down administration.
- Because of an inadvertent whistle.

# Girl's Flag Football

## PENALTY SUMMARY

### **LOSS of 5 YARDS**

Delay of game  
Failure to properly wear mandatory player equipment just before the snap  
Illegal substitution  
Encroachment  
Snap Infraction  
False Start  
Illegal Formation (less than 4 players on A's line)  
Illegal Shift or Illegal Motion  
Illegally handing ball forward (also loss of down)  
Illegal forward pass (by A; also loss of down)  
Illegal forward pass (by B)  
Helping runner  
Sideline Interference  
Outside of team box, but not on field  
Illegal QB run (also loss of down)  
Illegal Defensive Rush  
Illegal Flag Pull (also first down)

### **LOSS of 10 YARDS**

Illegal Blocking Technique  
Holding  
Illegal Block in Back  
Excessive Contact  
Offensive / Defensive Pass Interference  
Flag Guarding (by A; also loss of down)  
Hurdle / Spinning / Diving  
Roughing the Passer (also first down)  
Tackling  
Sliding

### **DISQUALIFICATION ASSOCIATED WITH CERTAIN PENALTIES**

Flagrant Excessive Contact  
Fighting by Player or nonplayer  
Intentionally Contacting a Game Official  
Striking, kicking, kneeling  
A second unsportsmanlike foul by player or nonplayer  
A substitute leaving team box during a fight  
Second violation of tampering with a flag (first violation is recorded warning)