

**MAINE SPORTSMANSHIP LEAGUE
PRIMARY DIVISION**

LEAGUE RULES AND AGREEMENTS

Final Draft May 2, 2001

Revised January 15, 2015

MISSION STATEMENT: We as members of this league intend to unite our efforts in order to establish the very best environment in which student athletes can learn to balance academics, sportsmanship, and team play.

GOALS:

1. Agree upon a set of rules, or by-laws, that each team can benefit from mutually.
2. Establish a schedule that allows each team fair opportunities to play and meet the needs of their student athletes.
3. Gain a solid relationship with an established board of certified officials including a contracted wage.
4. Initiate a system to recognize both sportsmanship and academic achievement for our participants.
5. Recognize the need for safety by providing information so that all coaches can take NYSCA courses.
6. Approve additional teams into our program under current guidelines.

LEAGUE RULES AND ELIGIBILITY

Section 1: Academics

- A. Each team shall stress the importance of academics to all the athletes reminding them that they are students who play football and not football players that are students. Coaches shall work with parents and the athlete to promote excellence in the classroom.

Section 2: Safety

- A. All Team must have proper liability insurance coverage for their football program, including coaches, in order to participate in this league. Verification of all needed policies are required before the start date of each current season. Copies of policies will be kept in the possession of league officials in case of emergency.
- B. Proper access to first aid equipment must be in place at each practice and game for the use of all participants. Access to water must also be provided at each practice and game.
- C. Access to emergency ambulance service should be provided at each game.
- D. All teams will request 3 officials for each game. Two officials can be used if the teams are playing a scrimmage format or an official is injured a scrimmage format will be used.
- E. Head coaches for all teams in every division must have USA Football tackle certification.

Section 3: Rules

- A. Teams must be comprised of student athletes from the community the program represents. Regional teams are not allowed. Players should attend school or reside in the town(s) their organization represents. Each community must notify the league by May 15th of the current year of the following:
 - 1. How many athletes have signed up for their program.
 - 2. How many teams they intend on entering into the league.
 - 3. Colors of uniforms and place of contests and practices.
 - 4. Insurance verifications.
 - 5. Officers of program and address for mailings.
 - 6. Dues they intend on paying if required by the league.
- B. Student athletes must be currently eligible for the upcoming school year in grades 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 only. A student may play in 6th grade if they have stayed back

one year in their academic career. If they have been retained in two prior grades, or years, they are not eligible in their sixth grade year.

- C. Each program will provide a team roster for all 2nd & 3rd grade, JV and Varsity teams to the league president 48 hours before the first game for distribution to all member organizations. Rosters should include player name, uniform number, grade and if the player weighs over 110 pounds in full equipment **without helmet** for Pee Wee rosters, over 135 pound in full equipment **without helmet** for JV rosters and over 150 pounds in full equipment **without helmet** for varsity rosters. Players should be weighed with each programs president or VP present.
- D. A player must remain with their team for the entire season. If they move they must apply to the board of directors for new eligibility.
- E. Once the season starts the only way a player can be added to the roster is with board of directors' approval.
- F. Player evaluations, **drills, skills and conditioning** are allowed three weeks prior to the first game. **There should be no organized team practices where offense or defensive plays are installed during this week.** Preseason team practice is allowed to start two weeks prior to the first game. Practices are allowed to be no longer than three hours in length including warm-up and cool-down periods. Practice can be held no more than 5 days per week during preseason period. No more than one session in one day.
- G. Regular season practices are to be no longer than two hours in length including warm-up and cool-down periods. Regular season practices are to be held no more than three times in any week. No more than one session in one day.
- H. Players should be matched by age and size for safety reasons. Organizations are allowed to determine the number of teams they wish to enter at each level, Pee Wee, JV or varsity, independent of the number of teams they have at other levels. For example an organization may have one varsity team, two JV teams and three Pee Wee teams. Each coach shall provide a roster to the opposing coach prior to the game. 6th graders are not eligible to play in the JV game unless mutually agreed upon.
- I. Varsity and JV games will have eight minute quarters with stopped time. Players who participate in 12 or more plays from scrimmage in a position during a varsity contest cannot play in a JV game. Teams must declare which 5th graders playing in the varsity game would be eligible to play in the JV game before the player enters the varsity game. Also, the team is responsible to assign a person to count plays for all declared 5th graders. The opposing team has the right to ask for a play count on any of the declared 5th graders. Also, if mutually agreed upon by

both JV head coaches, 5th graders who played 12 or more plays in the varsity game can still play in the JV game.

- J. During the varsity and JV game, one coach may be on the field on both offense and defense. During the Pee Wee game, two coaches may be on the field for both offense and defense. There will be no coaching from the on field coaches after the huddle breaks other than repositioning an out of position player. On-field coaches must be at least 20 yards from the line of scrimmage at the start of the play. After one warning, an unsportsmanlike penalty will be called on any on field coach that is coaching after the huddle breaks or during a play.
- K. If a game remains tied at the end of regulation, at the varsity level, up to three overtime possessions will be played before the game ends in a tie. At the JV level, one overtime possession will be played before the game ends in a tie. At the 2nd & 3rd grade level, the game ends in a tie, no overtime. High School Federation rules for a tiebreak shall be used.
- L. Weight rule: NO PLAYER WEIGHING MORE THAN 110 LBS AT THE PEE WEE LEVEL, 135 LBS AT HE JV AND 150 LBS AT THE VARSITY LEVEL IN EQUIPMENT **WITHOUT A HELMET** CAN LINE UP IN THE OFFENSIVE BACKFIELD AND/OR ADVANCE THE BALL INCLUDING KICKOFF AND PUNT RETURNS OR ON DEFENSE FOLLOWING A TURNOVER. If they recover a fumble or intercept the ball, it remains dead at that spot. Forty eight hours before the first game, each team will submit a full roster indicating which players exceed the weight limit. Each member organizations president or VP are responsible for submitting this information. All players in-eligible to advance the ball will be given a sticker to place on the back of their helmet. The home team shall have a scale available and coaches may challenge a player's weight. Coaches may challenge the weight of a player before the game or during halftime without penalty to either team. When a coach challenges a weight during the game, the challenging team will be charged with a timeout and play will be stopped. If the challenge is unsuccessful, the challenging team will be assessed an unsportsmanlike penalty. If the challenge is successful, the opposing team will be assessed an unsportsmanlike penalty.
- M. Offensive rules:
1. Teams must use a huddle, except for the final 2 minutes of each half.
 2. A cadence must be used to signal the start of a play at the JV level.
 3. No blocking below the waist (cut or crack blocking).
 4. Ends must not advance the ball if they do not meet weight rule.

N. Defensive rules:

1. Defensive lineman must line up helmet to helmet with offensive lineman and be in a three or four point stance..
2. Defensive ends must line up helmet to helmet, outside shoulder, or outside the last interior lineman.
3. Linebackers must line up three yards off the line of scrimmage.
4. Linebackers can line up one yard from the line of scrimmage when opponent is inside their 10 yard line.

O. Special teams:

1. Punts: Varsity - punts are declared. The punting team must have seven players on the line of scrimmage with no more than one yard splits, two split ends, and two players including the punter in the backfield between the tackles. The receiving team must have 8 players on the line of scrimmage with no more than 3 players back. The ball must always be punted at least 7 yds from the line of scrimmage and from within the tackle box. If the punter muffs the snap, then the ball must be kicked from where the kicker gains possession unless it is outside the tackle box in which case the ball will be moved inside the tackle box but no closer to the the line of scrimmage before it is punted or unless it is less than 7 yds from the line of scrimmage in which case the ball will be moved back at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage before it is punted. No rush is allowed and the punting team is not allowed downfield at the snap. The play becomes live when the ball is kicked, the punt can be returned, the receiving team may block and the punting team may proceed downfield to tackle the punt returner.

JV- punts are declared. The punting team must have seven players on the line of scrimmage with no more than one yard splits, two split ends, and two players including the punter in the backfield between the tackles. The receiving team must have 8 players on the line of scrimmage with no more than 3 players back. The ball must always be punted at least 7 yds from the line of scrimmage and from within the tackle box. If the punter muffs the snap, then the ball must be kicked from where the kicker gains possession unless it is outside the tackle box in which case the ball will be moved inside the tackle box but no closer to the the line of scrimmage before it is punted or unless it is less than 7 yds from the line of scrimmage in which case the ball will be moved back at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage before it is punted. No rush is allowed or no blocking takes place even after the snap. The punt may be caught but not returned. If the receiving player muffs the punt behind him, it will be spotted where it rolls dead or is downed. If the receiver muffs the punt forward, the ball will be spotted where the player first made contact with the ball.

2nd & 3rd grade – Punta are declared and the ball is advanced 30 yds or to the receiving teams 20 yd line whichever is further from the receiving teams goal line.

2. Kickoffs: Varsity and JV - live kickoffs. Pee Wee (2nd & 3rd grade) - the ball will be spotted at the receiving teams 30 yd line.

3. Field goals and extra point attempts are declared kicks at all levels. There is no rush or blocking, lineman take a knee. The ball must be snapped to a holder and the ball must be kicked from at least 5 yds from the line of scrimmage. If the holder muffs the snap, he may bring the ball back to where the kicking tee is placed.

- P. All games will be played on a grass surface free from obstructions which will be no shorter than 80 yards and no longer than 100 yards from goal line to goal line by no narrower than 40 yards wide or wider than 53 yards.
- Q. The official size ball of this league will be a TDJ size football.
- R. Sportsmanship Rules: Once a team gains a 24-point or greater advantage over an opponent in any league game, the head coach is responsible to take deliberate steps with play selection and personnel changes not to increase the lead. These steps shall include but are not limited to no passing, no double hand-offs (reverses) and obvious personnel changes. Action will only be taken when the opposing coach submits a complaint that the rule has been violated to the President. The executive board will investigate the matter and rule on any disciplinary action. In addition to violations of the 24 point rule, any obvious unsportsmanlike behavior should also be reported for investigation and possible disciplinary action. Game officials will also report all unsportsmanlike penalties and any other in appropriate behavior to the assigner. The assigner will document all occurrences and take action with the individual organization, the MSL president or the entire MSL board
- S. Member organizations may elect to enter 2nd & 3rd grade teams into the league. The 2nd & 3rd grade teams will use the JV rules with the following exceptions, no kickoffs, punts are advanced 30 yards or to the opponents 20 yd line, no defensive player is allowed to line up opposite the center on the line of scrimmage, a pee wee size ball will be used, there will be no overtime, a player weighing over 110 pounds in full equipment may not advance the ball or line up in the offensive backfield and a "banana snap" may be used. The "banana snap" is defined by the long axis of the ball being placed parallel to the line of scrimmage and the center holding the ball by both ends during the snap.

LEAGUE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Section 1: Administration

- A. The Maine Sportsmanship Primary League will be represented by all of its members in good standing. Each member will be granted one (1) vote in each action taken by this league.
- B. The MSL membership will form each year an Executive Board consisting of one member from each program in good standing. The Executive Board will meet at least once each year to discuss League business. Meetings must have a quorum of a simple majority in order to make any changes to existing rules and by-laws.
- C. All changes or additions to rules must be submitted in writing to the executive Board for review.
- D. Once new rules are adopted they will be in effect from that day forward and must be carried out equally by all.
- E. Annually the executive Board must take a vote and elect the following officers:

- President
- Vice president (if needed)
- Secretary

These elected offices are to be held for a term of one year each. Elected officers can serve consecutive terms.

- F. The position of PRESIDENT will be responsible for the following:
 - 1. Call meetings and set agenda
 - 2. Call meetings to order
 - 3. Preside over meetings
 - 4. Enforce all by-laws
 - 5. Monitor Treasurer activity and be responsible for Treasurer activity.
- G. The position of VICE PRESIDENT will be responsible for the following:
 - 1. Perform presidential duties in absence of the President
 - 2. Coordinate Ad Hoc committee actions and present them to the executive Board
 - 3. Monitor Secretary record keeping

- H. The position of TREASURER will be responsible for the following:
1. Maintain all financial records for the league itself
 2. Present detailed monthly Treasurer's report including income and expenditures
 3. Present a budget to the President for Board review annually
 4. Set up an account with President with dual signature requirement
 5. Reconcile monthly bank statements and keep them in good order

- I. The position of SECRETARY will be responsible for the following:
1. Maintain all records for League
 2. Keep minutes at all Board meetings
 3. Obtain copies of Ad Hoc committee meetings and present to the Board
 4. Mail minutes to all Board Members after each meeting
 5. Mail meeting notifications to all Board Members

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Section 1: Agenda

Call meeting to order
Roll call
Reading of minutes
Acceptance of minutes
Vice president report of Ad Hoc committee actions
Old business
New business
Set date and agenda for next meeting
Adjournment

Section 2: League membership

- A. All members must be committed to the mission of this league. Each member will need to meet the following obligations:
1. Abide by the League Rules
 2. Provide proof of proper insurance
 3. Provide an academic eligibility requirement for student athletes
 4. Establish a program for both JV and Varsity programs
 5. Provide access for coaches to proper training

- B. All members must be voted into League using proper Parliamentary procedure presented in this document.
- C. Team size shall be no less than 15 players per team and no more than 45 per team.

SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD

The League recognizes the importance of Sportsmanship for all student athletes. At the conclusion of the season, a committee of officials selected by the assigner shall choose an organization to be awarded The Sportsmanship Award. It will remain with that team until the following season when a new winner is chosen.

CODE OF ETHICS

The following code of ethics will be followed in all areas for all associated with our programs: Any player, fan, or coach ejected from a contest will be removed immediately for the remainder of that contest and is ineligible for the next contest as well. A second offense will lead to ineligibility for the remainder of the current season.