

## 2024 Girls' Flag Rules Interpretation and Clarifications

Rules will be applied to flag contests in the following matter:

1. When possible, the rulebook will be used to administer games. The rulebook shall be applied 100% of the time when the rule is clearly defined in the rulebook, however when a conflict or discrepancy arises or a specific rule is not clearly defined in the rule book, officials shall refer to the additional interpretations and clarifications published by the Maryland Girls' Flag Football Rules Clarification Committee. Local jurisdictions will meet on a regular basis to send out interpretations and clarify conflicts and discrepancies.
2. When a rule is not clearly defined in the Girls' Flag Rulebook and the Rules Clarification Committee has not clarified a particular rule, officials shall do their best to apply the National Federation of High School Sports Football Rulebook to administer a rule.
3. If the above 2 protocols cannot be applied to a certain scenario, the Referee shall administer the rule in a fashion in which he/she believes to be the most fair and equitable ruling.

The Rules Clarification Committee has clarified the following rules (Please note it is not in the agenda for the committee to change the rules, only to clarify the rules that have already been written). The following shall be administered as follows:

- Defensive Pass Interference will be enforced from the spot of the foul plus an automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down. The ball shall be placed at the spot where the foul was committed. If the foul occurs in the endzone, the ball shall be placed on the 1-yardline.
- Face guarding is illegal, it is a foul to obstruct an opponent's view while a legal pass is in flight, even if no contact is made. The penalty will be enforced as any other pass interference foul.
- Intentional grounding will be enforced from the spot of the foul. The enforcement is 5-yards from the spot of foul + loss of right to replay the down. (Note: the restrictions for intentional grounding are not eased as in NFHS, NCAA, or NFL. If a passer attempts to conserve yardage by throwing the ball into an area not occupied by an eligible teammate, it is foul, regardless if the passer is out of the pocket or beyond the lateral confines of the free blocking zone).
- Illegal Forward Pass is a spot foul. To resolve a conflict in the rulebook and follow the all but one principle, illegal forward pass shall be administered from the spot of the foul. The foul will be enforced 5-yards from the spot of the foul + a loss of down. After a change of possession if an illegal forward pass is thrown the loss of down effect is voided. If after enforcement of 5-yards if the offense still makes the line to gain the loss of down aspect has no effect and the offense will start with a 1<sup>st</sup> down. (Example 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2 for Team A. Player A1 gains 10 yards then throw an illegal forward pass. After the penalty of 5 yards, A is still in front of the line to gain, therefore the next down will be 1<sup>st</sup> down).

- If there is a bad snap the ball is dead and the down counts. The ball shall be placed where it hit the ground. If the ball strikes the ground in a team's own endzone it is a safety.
- The clock will stop at 2-minutes and begins on the next snap. This is not a time out and teams are not to have a conference. The referee shall make the ball ready for play as soon as possible after the clock is stopped. If the ball is live when the clock reaches 2 minutes, play shall continue and stop when the play is dead. (Example- during a long run, the clock runs down to 1:53. The clock shall stop when the play ends. The clock will remain at 1:53 and start on the next snap).
- After 2-minutes in a half, a 1<sup>st</sup> down will **NOT** stop the clock. The clock will only stop as defined in the rulebook.
- For safety of all players involved, hair that touches the waist shall be tucked into the jersey or be pulled up to prevent it from being pulled.
- During a try for point, if the defense gains possession of the ball they may return it for a 2-point touchdown. The touchdown will count as 2 points for the defense regardless of where the try for point was attempted from.
- During overtime if the defense gains possession of the ball they may return it for a 2-point touchdown. In this scenario the game would be over and the defense would win.
- In 4OT (where the offense attempts to gain as many yards as possible), if there is a defensive foul the penalty yardage may be added (by the offended team's choice) added to the offense's total yardage.
- Nonplayers and coaches shall comply with NFHS Football Rulebook Rule 9-8-3. Nonplayers shall remain out of the restricted area while the ball is live. This rule shall be the same as NFHS.
- NFHS Rule 9-9 regarding unfair acts applies to all flag contests. Example of unfair acts include but are not limited to hiding the ball under the jersey or two or more players of the same team possessing the ball at the same time in an attempt to deceive the defense.
- Conduct of players shall be enforced within Rule 9-5 of the NFHS Rulebook
- Conduct of Non-players including but not limited to coaches, attendants and game personal shall be administered under rule 9-8.

#### Points of Emphasis Regarding Flag Football in Maryland Public Schools

- Coaches, players, and officials are reminded that Girl's Flag Football is a noncontact sport. Players must attempt to avoid contact all cost.
- Defensive players must attempt to go around blockers. Defensive players who rush directly into blockers shall be penalized for illegal contact.
- Blocking or screening beyond the line of scrimmage is illegal.
- Offensive blockers must have their hands behind their back or at their sides. A blocker who has placed her hands on hips to widen her frame has committed an illegal block.
- When contact occurs between two or more opponents, game officials must rule on whether the players were attempting to avoid contact. If 2 or more opponents collided

and the game official judges that both player were attempting to avoid contact there is no foul.

- The emphasis is on avoiding contact when judging whether a player has committed a foul or not. If a player rushes in out of control to grab a flag or make a block, even though there may have been no intent to contact the opponent, the player must attempt to avoid contact. Officials can apply the same philosophy from NFHS Rule 2-32-16. The opponent is responsible for making legal contact, and in the case of flag football the only contact shall be a flag pull unless there is unavoidable contact.