



# MOOSE JAW YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE RULES 2017

## Player Attire

- Cleats are recommended and must be rubber (no metal tips)
- Before the beginning of each play, players' flags must be at the player's sides, properly attached and unobstructed by other clothing
- Jerseys must be tucked in at all times
- Shorts or pants must not be the same colour as the player's flags, nor can shorts or pants have vertical stripes the same colour as the player's flags
- For safety reasons, it is strongly recommended that pants/shorts do not have pockets
- Baseball caps, hats, sunglasses, watches and jewelry of any kind is not permitted on the field of play
- All coaches are responsible to make sure that players have the flags positioned correctly, jerseys tucked in and no loose parts of the belt are exposed that might be mistaken for a flag. This is a safety and fair play issue. Players in question will be ordered off the field if they can't fix the issue or if they disregard it
- **ALL PLAYERS MUST WEAR A MOUTH GUARD. THEY CANNOT PLAY WITHOUT ONE**

## Field Dimensions and Markings

- Length: 60 yards
- Width: 24 yards
- End Zones: 10 yards deep
- No-running zones: Must be marked 5 yards from each end zone
- Parents are designated to remain on the side of the field across from the team benches

## Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Convert: 1 point (played from the 5 yard line)
- 2 points (played from the 10 yard line)
- Safety: 2 points
- A win constitutes 2 points, a tie 1 point and a loss 0 points
- Standings will be kept in the 10/11, 12/13, 14/15 and 16/17/18 Age Divisions only

**NOTE:** An interception returned to the opponent's end zone on a convert play by the defense will result in the defense scoring 2 points and gaining possession for the next series at their own 5 yard line.

### **Number of Players**

- Teams consist of 6 – 10 players (5 on the field at a time)
- Teams may play with a minimum of four (4) players
- If less than 4 players are available, the teams should still try and play a game during the time slot by adjusting the rosters to even out the teams (share players). The team without enough players will forfeit points in the standings (if applicable)
- Teams that have 4 players can play will pick-up players from the division below. If the team has 5 players 1 pick-up player can be used to provide rest for the original 5 players. If the team has 6+ players pick-ups cannot be used

### **Timing/Overtime**

- Game length is 40 minutes running time (2 halves, 20 minutes each, with a 5 minute half time). Game running time remains the same even if a game starts late
- If the score remains tied at the end of regulation play, a tie will be awarded with each team receiving one point in the standings
- **PLAYOFFS/FINALS ONLY:** If the score is tied at the end of regulation time, teams move directly into overtime. A coin toss determines first possession of overtime. The team that wins the coin toss starts with the ball on the opponent's 5 yard line. The game is decided by alternating convert attempts from the 5 yard line. If the team with first possession scores, the second must match that score to continue the overtime period. If the first team does not score, the second team can win by scoring their convert. If neither team scores, overtime will continue until one team scores and the other is unable to convert their attempt. There will be no timeouts granted during the overtime period.
- After the ball is spotted by the official, the offense has 20 seconds to snap the ball
- **Each team has 1 x 60 second time out per half.** The clock stops during a time out. Time outs cannot be carried over to the second half
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion (injury).
- The teams will be given a 2 minute warning until the final 3 plays at the 16 minute mark of each half.
- There will be a halftime of 5 minutes between the first and second half
- The game cannot end on a defensive penalty
- The Offense cannot down the final 3 plays of the game unless the score difference is greater than 8 points. One of the plays must be a pass if a 1<sup>st</sup> down is not obtained, a TD is scored or a penalty resulting in a 1<sup>st</sup> down occurs

## **IN PLAY RULES**

### **FLAG FOOTBALL IS A NON-CONTACT SPORT. BLOCKING OR TACKLING IS NOT PERMITTED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **Possession**

- Before the start of the game, captains will gather and perform a rock/paper/scissors challenge to win the option of first possession or the choice of which end zone to defend. If the winning team elects to choose an end, the losing team will assume first possession. The losing team will have possession at the beginning of the second half
- There are no kickoffs
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at their 5 yard line and has 3 downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, a new set of 3 downs begins. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on their 5 yard line

- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from their 5 yard line
- An automatic first down by penalty will overrule the other requirements regarding 3 plays to make either a first down or score
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5 yard line
- The rusher will pick a side to the right or left of the bean bag (not on top of it)
- The center will line up on the opposite side of the rusher
- The offensive team must form a huddle before the first play following a change of possession. Failure to do so will result in an illegal procedure penalty
- **The Offense must have a cadence. It must be at least 3 words. 6-7 ages should use down, set, hut. 8+ can use any cadence consisting of at least 3 words**
- Teams change sides at half time
- ***One pass MUST be made for every new set of downs (i.e. Play #1 – run, play #2 – run, play # 3 must be a pass.)***

### Running

- To start the play, the ball must be snapped between the legs of the center
- The center is the player who gives the ball to the quarterback via a snap. The center cannot take a direct handoff back from the quarterback
- The quarterback is the player who receives the ball directly from the snap
- The quarterback cannot run with the ball past the line of scrimmage
- An offence may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage. Only backward or lateral handoffs are allowed
- Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed. Downfield tosses or laterals are not permitted. Once a player has possession of the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, any loss of possession will be blown dead by the official
- “No-running zones” are located 5 yards from each end zone. When the ball is on or inside the 5-yard line going towards the opponent's end zone, the offense cannot use a running play to cross the line of scrimmage. If a run play occurs within the 5 yard no-run zone, the play will be blown dead and a loss of down will occur
- Any player who takes a handoff or pitch can throw the ball forward from behind the line of scrimmage, provided that the previous handoff or pitch was not made in a forward direction
- All defensive players are eligible to rush once the ball has been handed off, tossed or there is a play-action fake or fake handoff
- Spinning is allowed, but offensive players cannot jump or dive to avoid a defensive player. If the ball carrier jumps or dives, the play will be blown dead and the ball will be placed at the spot the player left the ground. It can also result in a turnover on downs if this occurs on a 3<sup>rd</sup> down
- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled
- A touchdown, convert or safety will be awarded when the ball carrier's hips (not the football, itself) pass through the invisible vertical plane of the goal line.
- There are no fumble recoveries in flag football, with the exception of the quarterback at the snap. If the quarterback fumbles the ball at the snap, **ONLY** the quarterback can recover the ball and continue the play.
- All other fumbles will result in a dead ball at the spot of the fumble
- Any fumble by the offensive team in their own end zone other than a dropped ball during the initial exchange between the center and quarterback will result in a safety
- If the ball is snapped, pitched or rolls out of the end zone behind the goal line, a safety will be awarded

### Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage)
- Prior to the snap, all players may be in motion in any direction, with the exception of the center
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception. (A receiver cannot return on to the playing field from an out of bounds position and be the first to touch the football)
- Once a player catches the ball and proceeds beyond the line of scrimmage he/she is no longer allowed to lateral or pass the ball
- Players may catch the ball while on their knees, back or side, however the play is blown dead and the ball is spotted where the catch was made
- Players are eligible to catch a pass if their flag has fallen off, however the play is blown dead and the ball is spotted where the catch was made
- If a player dives to catch a ball, the play is dead where the catch is made (where the players' feet/body land at the time of the catch)
- If both an offensive and defensive player catch the ball simultaneously, the tie will always go to the offense

### **Passing**

- The quarterback has seven (7) seconds to throw the ball; he/she cannot cross the line of scrimmage with the ball
- Once the ball is handed off, tossed or there is a play-action fake or fake handoff, the seven (7) second rule is no longer in effect
- Any hand-off, pitch or throw that is made by the quarterback behind him/her and behind the line of scrimmage can also be handed-off, pitched, shovel passed (unlimited) as long as it occurs behind the player with the ball and behind the line of scrimmage. At any point during this action the ball can be pitched, shovel passed or thrown in a forward motion (once) as long as it occurs behind the line of scrimmage.
- Any ball being thrown, pitched or shovel passed in a forward motion is considered a forward pass and cannot be handed off, pitched or shovel passed again.

### **Dead Plays**

- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball/play
- Play is ruled "dead" when:
  - Official blows the whistle
  - Ball carrier's flag is pulled or becomes illegal (**Note:** illegal means the flag is not in a position for the defense to pull it, or it falls off)
  - If the ball carrier's flag falls off or becomes illegal, the play will be whistled dead and the ball will be spotted at the spot where the flag fell off
  - Ball carrier steps out of bounds
  - A Touchdown or safety is scored
  - When any part of the ball carrier's body, other than a hand or foot touches the ground
  - Players are eligible to catch a pass if their flag has fallen off, but will be ruled down upon making the catch
  - When the ball is fumbled
  - When the ball is stripped – Note: Intentional stripping of the ball is not allowed and will result in a five (5) yard defensive penalty

### **Defensive Rushing**

- All defenders must be a minimum of one (1) yard away from the line of scrimmage prior to the start of the play
- A bean bag designates the rushing zone - 7 yards from the line of scrimmage and centered directly opposite the ball
- The rusher will pick which side of the beanbag he wants to rush from. The center will pick the other side to snap the ball from
- Only players starting 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage can rush the quarterback prior to a handoff, toss, play-action fake or fake handoff
- Any number of players can rush the quarterback
- A maximum of one defensive player is permitted to line up within the protected rush zone, established 2 yards either side of the 7 yard marker. This player is entitled to an unobstructed path to rush the quarterback. Interference with a rusher who begins from the protected zone will result in an offensive penalty for rusher Interference
- The rusher starting from the protected rushing zone must continue the rush once inside the 7 yard marker until the quarterback exchanges the ball with another player
- A rusher lined up more than 2 yards either side of the 7 yard marker is not entitled to an unobstructed rush to the quarterback and may be interfered
- All defenders may rush once the ball is handed off or tossed, or if there is a play-action fake or fake handoff
- A rusher may block a pass but is prohibited from hitting the quarterback's throwing arm or hand at or above the quarterback's shoulder while attempting to make a pass. This includes the quarterback's natural follow-through motion or hitting the ball prior to its release from the quarterback's throwing hand (above the shoulder)

### **Interceptions**

- Interceptions change the possession of the ball
- The defense can return interceptions
- On interceptions that occur and remain in the end zone, the ball will become dead and will result in the ball belonging to the intercepting team on their 5 yard line. Should an interception occur in the end zone and the ball carrier leave the end zone, the ball will belong to the intercepting team at the spot the ball becomes dead. However, should the ball carrier return to the end zone and be de-flagged or the ball be ruled dead, the result would be a safety for the other team

### **Tipped Passes**

- Tipped passes are legal. If the pass is an onside pass, the ball can be advanced when caught

### **Bobbled Passes**

- When a ball carrier deliberately throws the ball into the air, then catches it to avoid being flagged, the ball is dead immediately
- When the ball carrier accidentally loses control of the ball, then catches it without the ball being touched by another player, the play continues. If the ball carrier was flagged by an opponent after losing control of the ball, the play is considered dead when the ball carrier was flagged

### **Deliberate Grounding Pass**

- When the passer deliberately throws the ball out of bounds, or to an area where there is no receiver in an obvious attempt to avoid a loss of ground, the passer will be penalized for grounding (Spot of foul and loss of down)
- If the passer throws it out of bounds but a receiver is in the area, no penalty will be called

### **Right of Way / Obstruction Rules**

- **All players have a shared responsibility to minimize incidental contact and ensure safe play**
- Officials should respect good defensive positioning. This includes positioning established prior to the snap of the ball and effective zone play
- Once the play has started, defensive players must allow receivers the opportunity to run their routes and are prohibited from deliberately moving to obstruct the path of a moving receiver
- It is up to the ball carrier to control his/her momentum and direction to avoid contact with defensive players
- Offensive players are prohibited from deliberately charging or “running through” defenders who have pre-positioned themselves prior to the start of the play, or who have, through pursuit or zone positioning, established themselves ahead of the offensive player’s intended path
- Defensive players who establish a position ahead of the ball carrier’s path are expected to make every attempt to pull the ball carrier’s flag. Purely obstructive defensive positioning made with the intent of inducing contact and/or drawing an offensive penalty is prohibited and will result in a defensive penalty for unnecessary roughness
- Defenders must be allowed a clear path to the player carrying the ball. Offensive players without possession of the ball are prohibited from lining up or moving into stalemated positions to act as blockers or move collectively as a “wall” in order to obstruct defensive players from reaching the ball carrier
- Pick plays are prohibited. A pick play is an illegal play in which an offensive player(s) attempts to impede the progress of a defender in order to allow a teammate to get open for a pass. It also includes the intentional obstruction of a rusher by the quarterback during a hand-off or toss to another offensive player
- Should two or more opposing players collide while attempting to catch a pass, a penalty will not necessarily be called provided that no interference took place and the players involved were making a legitimate attempt to play the ball. While discouraged, such contact should be considered incidental

### **Sportsmanship**

- **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**
- Acts of flagrant contact (tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any physically unsportsmanlike act) will result in a 15 yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty. Depending on the severity of the infraction, offending players may also be ejected from the game at the Referee’s discretion
- Trash talking and taunting is illegal. Trash talk and taunting includes directed profanity or talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, coaches or spectators. Team(s) guilty of Taunting will be penalized 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct and the individuals responsible may be subject to ejection at the referee’s discretion
- Deliberate questioning of referee’s calls may be penalized at the referee’s discretion
- Any physical or verbal abuse of a referee by a player, coach or spectator will result in a 15 yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and an immediate ejection of the offending party from the game. Coaches and players guilty of this offense will be subject to disciplinary review by the League Executive, the result of which may include suspension or expulsion from the League
- In the event that parents are asked to leave the field for inappropriate behaviour, the coach will be expected to assist the referees if the parents are unwilling to leave. If the parents persist and do not leave the field, the team that the parents are sided with will forfeit the game

- Once a flag is pulled, the defensive player should drop the flag at the spot at which it was pulled or hold the flag above his/her head. Intentionally throwing the flag at players, slamming them into the ground or away from the spot is considered poor flag etiquette and will result in a 15 yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty

## **PENALTIES**

- Penalties are 5 yards with the exception of defensive pass interference and intentional grounding (spot foul), illegal flag pull (spot foul plus 5 yards), unnecessary roughness and unsportsmanlike conduct (15 yards)
- Penalties will not exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line from the line of scrimmage
- Referees determine if incidental contact is a normal part of the play or if roughing should be called
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage except for flag guarding, defensive pass interference, intentional grounding and illegal flag pull
- Only the team captain may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty
- If the offense and defense are both penalized with two penalties that are of the same distance, the down will be repeated
- If the offense and defense are both penalized, but one side is penalized with a 15 yard penalty, the difference between the penalties will be assessed and the down will be repeated

### **Offensive Penalties**

#### **5 yards and loss of down**

- Illegal Forward Pass – pass received behind the line of scrimmage (assessed on mandatory passing plays only) or a forward pass made beyond the line of scrimmage
- Offensive Pass Interference (illegal pick play, obstruction/blocking, pushing off/away defender)
- Offensive Pass Interference – illegally preventing a defender from catching the ball
- 7 sec pass - the quarterback has 7 seconds to throw the ball if play action does not occur.
- Illegal Contact – holding and blocking

#### **5 yards, down repeated**

- No cadence by the quarterback (silent snap or less than 3 words)
- Offside – if a player goes across the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped
- Substitution fouls – i.e. six players on the field; player enters field during the snap of the ball
- Delay of game – inability to snap the ball before the 20 second play clock expires
- False Start
- Illegal Snap – A snap not made between the legs of the center to the quarterback or a “balked” snap.
- Player out of bounds – if a player goes out of bounds without interference, the player may not return to the field to rejoin the play in progress
- Rusher Interference – it is illegal for a receiver, running back or center to run a pattern that interferes with a rusher who is at a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage and who begins rushing within 2 yards either side of the 7 yard rushing bean bag marker
- Player Out of Bounds – if a player leaves the line of field of play, comes back into the field of play and is the 1<sup>st</sup> on to touch the ball

#### **5 yards from the spot of foul and loss of down**

- Flag Guarding – using hands, arms or elbows to intentionally block the defender from pulling the flag

**Note:** Stiff arming a defender is a form of flag guarding and may also result in an unnecessary roughness penalty at the referee's discretion

- Diving or Jumping – if a player dives or jumps to avoid a flag pull or get the ball across the goal line
- Illegal Run Play – if the offense runs the ball inside the 5 yard no rush zone or 3 times in a row without a 1<sup>st</sup> down

### **15 Yards and a loss of down**

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct – intentional physical misconduct, verbal abuse, taunting
- Unnecessary Roughness – charging

### **Defensive Penalties**

#### **5 Yards and Automatic first down for the offence**

- Offside – occurs when a player is past the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball
- Illegal Contact – holding, blocking, obstructing the receiver
- Illegal Rush – occurs when a rusher is inside the minimum 7 yard rushing distance before the ball is snapped when attempting to rush the quarterback  
**Note:** The rusher must have passed the line of scrimmage to be considered an illegal rush. If the rusher goes back to the 7 yard distance and then continues his rush no penalty will be called
- Roughing the passer – Hitting the quarterback's throwing arm or hand at or above the quarterback's shoulder while attempting to make a pass. This includes the quarterback's natural follow-through motion or hitting the ball prior to its release from the quarterback's throwing hand (above the shoulder)

#### **5 Yards and down repeated**

- Disconcerting signals – Sounds or signals intended to simulate or disrupt offensive signals prior to the snap
- Interference with the ball at the snap
- Substitution fouls – i.e. 6 players on the field; player enters the field during the snap of the ball

#### **15 Yards and automatic first down**

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct – intentional physical misconduct, verbal abuse, taunting unnecessary roughness/roughing the passer

#### **Spot Foul and automatic first down**

- Defensive Pass Interference – illegally preventing a receiver from catching the ball. The ball will be placed at the spot of the interference with an automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

#### **Spot Foul, 5 yards and automatic first down**

- Illegal Flag Pull – occurs when a defensive player pulls an offensive player's flag with intention to cause a dead ball or making the receiver ineligible for a catch