

MARYLAND SOCCERPLEX

Flag Football Rules

(Reviewed – March 28, 2009)

All players, substitutes, coaches, and other persons authorized within the team area are subject to the rules and shall be governed by the decisions of the officials and/or league representatives of the Maryland SOCCERPLEX. No person(s) are entitled to disrupt the fun and integrity of the game that has been established for all.

BASIC RULES

- The offensive team must have at least 4 players on the line of scrimmage during snaps.
- **At least one player** must be behind the line of scrimmage (Quarterback).
- Any ball carrier shall not deliberately drive or run into a defensive player, nor straight-arm, nor make any move with his arms to protect his flag(s) – flag guarding penalty.
- Defensive players are not allowed to hold, grasp, or obstruct forward progress of the ball carrier when in the act of removing a flag.
- No jewelry or metal cleats.
- No food, gum, or flavored drinks are allowed on the turf surface; only water is permissible.
- All players must have a completed and signed waiver form turned into the League Office to be eligible to play.
- The ball will be placed at the spot where the ball is when the ball carrier's flag is pulled or if the ball carriers knee or the ball touches the ground.
- All players must start each play with their flag belts attached.
- Substitutions: Between downs any number of eligible substitutions may replace players before the start of the next play. An incoming player must enter the game directly from his/her team's bench area. A replaced player must leave the field directly towards his/her team's bench area.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

The game shall be played between 2 teams of 8 players each (All players eligible to receive passes). To start the game a minimum of 6 players are required to prevent a forfeit. The offensive team is required to have a minimum of 4 players on the line of scrimmage prior to each snap. The roster limit is 18 players.

EQUIPMENT:

Each player is required to wear triple threat flag belts (a one piece flag belt at the waistline with three flags permanently attached, one flag on each side and one in the center of the back). If cleats are worn, they must have a one-piece molded bottom (no metal cleats/spikes allowed). Illegal equipment includes: the use of headgear (Exception: stocking caps, headbands, skull caps are legal), forearm, hand, or elbow pads, shoulder pads, jewelry, or any unyielding or dangerous equipment. Any slippery or sticky substance of a foreign nature on equipment or exposed parts of the body is illegal. It is recommended that the pants or shorts worn by players do not have pockets (jeans are not permitted as well). All players must wear jerseys (shirts) long enough so that they remain tucked in during each down, or cut at least 4" above the flag belt. **Mouthpieces are strongly recommended.**

COIN TOSS:

Before the start of the game the referee will toss a coin in the presence of opposing captains, after first designating which captain shall call the fall of the coin. The captain winning the toss shall choose one of the following options, with play starting at the 10 yard line forward (no kickoffs but declared punts are allowed):

- Offense
- Defense
- To designate which goal his/her team will defend.
- To defer the choice of the above options to begin the second half.

GAME TIMING:

The game will consist of **two 22 minutes running halves** (of course the clock will stop on all timeouts and injury) and a 3 minute halftime; however, during the last 2 minutes of the **second half only**, the clock will stop on the following:

- Incomplete passes
- Out of bounds
- Touchdowns
- Extra points
- First Downs (If in-bounds, clock will start once the ref spots the ball – ready whistle)
- Change of possession
- Penalties

The offensive team has a thirty **(30) second play clock** to snap the ball once the referee has spotted the ball and blown the ready whistle. Each team is entitled to **two 30-second time-outs per half**, which do not carry over between halves. The referee will keep the time.

YARDS - DOWNS:

When a first down is gained in a zone, the team in possession of the ball is allowed four (4) downs to move the ball from that point into the next zone (the first down markers as well as the end-zone markers will be designated by cones). Once the ref blows the ready whistle, the offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball to avoid a delay of game penalty. All **punts** are declared kicks with **no rush** and the kicking team running down field after the ball is kicked.

FORWARD PASS:

Any member of the passing team is eligible to receive a pass. All forward passes must originate behind the line of scrimmage. The position of the feet will determine legality. Teams are allowed **only one forward pass per down**, however unlimited laterals (backwards passes) are permitted.

BLOCKING:

Blockers must be on their feet **at all times** while blocking. Two-on-one blocking may only occur behind the line of scrimmage; however, **Under NO Condition** shall low or rolling blocks be allowed.

All blocking must be done between the opposing player's waist and shoulders. Blockers are not allowed to swing, throw, or flip his/her elbow/forearm. Downfield blocking and open hand extended arm blocking is permitted (Blocking in the back is illegal – 10 yard penalty).

SCORING:

Scoring is as follows:

Touchdown	6 points
Extra point (from the 5 yard line)	1 point
Extra point (from the 10 yard line)	2 points
Extra point (intercepted and returned for a defensive score)	2 points
Safety	2 points

In order to score a touchdown, the ball must cross the plane of the goal line prior to the ball carrier being de-flagged. Legal receptions require the player to have possession of the ball and at least one foot down inbounds. A safety is scored when the offensive ball carrier's is de-flagged, the ball touches the ground, or the ball/ball-carrier goes out of bounds while in their own end zone. In each of these scenarios, the defensive team will gain possession of the ball at their own ten (10) yard line.

***MERCY RULE:** The game is over if a team is ahead by 17 points with 2 minutes remaining in the game.

OVERTIME:

There will be **no overtime during the regular season**. During the playoffs there will be overtime. All overtime periods are played towards the same goal line. A coin toss will determine which team has the options, as in the beginning of the game. Each team will start 1st and goal from the ten (10) yard line. An overtime period consists of one series of downs for each team. If both teams end up tied after the first over-time series, the team who had the ball second will have possession first in the next series. This process will be repeated until a winner is determined. Extra points will be attempted. **PLEASE NOTE:**

- Penalties shall be assessed according to the regular rules of the game.
- Intercepted passes may be returned in an overtime period. If the defense intercepts the ball and returns it for a touchdown, they will win the game. If they do not return the interception for a touchdown, the ball will be placed on the ten (10) yard line to begin their series of 4 downs. Each team is entitled to one time-out per overtime period.

DEAD BALL:

A live ball becomes dead and terminates play when an official sounds the whistle during any play. The ball will become dead when:

- The ball/ball carrier goes out of bounds or touches the ground.
- Any part of the ball carrier's person other than the hand or foot touches the ground. NOTE: the ball carrier may not contact the ball to the ground; once the ball touches the ground it terminates the play.
- A touchdown, touchback, safety or the conclusion of an extra point attempt.
- A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
- A backwards pass or fumble by a player touches the ground; which includes snaps. The ball will be put in play at the spot where it touched the ground.
- A ball carrier has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player. Any contact which causes the flag belt of a ball carrier to disconnect terminates the play; However, if the ball carriers flag falls off on it's own without contact from a defender, play is terminated by one hand tag on the ball carrier by a defender.
- During player injury or Ref time-outs.
- A muff of a scrimmage kick strikes the ground.
- Once the ball is touched during a free kick (punt) by the kicking team. The receiving team retains possession at the spot where the kicking team first touched the ball.
- The official inadvertently blows his/her whistle (Replay the down or the offense could take the result of the play at the point of the inadvertent whistle).

PENALTIES:

5-yard Penalties (Replay down):

- Offensive false start
- Defensive off-sides
- Defensive illegal chucking (1 chuck within 5 yards of the scrimmage line)
- Delay of Game
- Ball carrier diving to advance the ball (enforced from the spot of the foul)
- Illegal participation (no flag belt)
- Offense lined-up incorrectly
- Illegal number of players on the field

5-yard Penalties (plus loss of down):

- Illegal forward pass
- Intentional grounding

10-yard Penalties (Replay down):

- Illegal blocking/holding (enforced from the spot of the foul).
- Defensive pass interference (enforced from the line of scrimmage).
- Stiff arming/flag guarding (The ball carrier shall not initiate contact with defensive players).
- Tackling, tripping, pushing, or elbowing the ball carrier (Game ejection if deemed flagrant).
- Unsportsmanlike conduct (Including profanity).

10-yard penalties (plus loss of down):

- Offensive pass interference

INADVERTENT WHISTLE:

In flag football it is not uncommon for a ball to be mistakenly blown dead. In these cases, the offensive team shall have the option of replaying the down from the previous spot, or accepting the ball at the spot where it was blown dead. On all loose balls such as a pass in flight, the down must be replayed from the previous spot. After a change in possession, the team in possession at the time the ball is blown dead shall have the option of accepting the play or replaying the down.

TEAM-INDIVIDUAL CONDUCT:

Team captains are responsible for their team's conduct on and off the field while at the SOCCERPLEX. Only the team captain is allowed to interact with referee regarding a call during the game. Unsportsmanlike conduct may be called at any time and is completely at the discretion of the referees. Unsportsmanlike conduct (10 yard penalty) includes:

- Excessively rough playing
- Tackling or pushing
- Taunting the other team
- Abusive or insulting language to anyone
- Aggressively challenging the referee
- Any other kind of behavior that the referees and/or league administrators deem inappropriate

FORFEITS:

Any team that cannot meet the number of players required to play an official game will forfeit the game. In order to avoid a \$50 fine, your team must notify us at least 24 hours prior to the time of your game. The fines must be paid before your next game in order for your team to remain eligible to play.

COED FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

The Coed program will use the same rules as mentioned above with the following modifications:

NUMBER OF FEMALES:

During 8 on 8 team play, a team must always have at least two (2) women on the field at all times. There is no maximum amount of females permitted; therefore a team could actually play with up to eight (8) females during any series.

FEMALE PARTICIPATION:

A female player must be the “operative player” at least once every three (3) downs. Women can be used at any point during any play but regardless of the down, if two consecutive plays during a possession excluded a female participant, the following play must involve a female as the operative player. Three consecutive plays failing to use a female as an operative player will result in a loss of down.

An operative player is defined as a player who:

- Is the intended receiver on a pass play (a completion is not necessary)
- Runs the ball on a running play (in an attempt to gain positive yards)
- Receives the snap as QB and attempts a pass or runs (in an attempt to gain positive yards)
- Catches the ball on a deflected pass

An operative player is **NOT** defined as a player who:

- Lines up as QB and hands off the football
- Snaps the ball into play
- Receives a handoff only to give it back to a male before crossing the line of scrimmage
- Lines up as QB only to spike the ball
- Lines up as QB and allows defense to intentionally sack her

Other examples

- If a male intentionally throws the ball at the feet of a female in the eyes of the officials, it will NOT count a play where a female was the operative player.
- If a male catches the ball on a pass play and then laterals it to a female, the “hook-and-ladder” play, it will NOT count as a play where a female was the operative player.

DEFENSE:

One-on-One coverage is required during forced-gender play (two consecutive plays have been run with failure to use a female as an operative player). Teams may play zone or one-on-one coverage otherwise. During one-on-one coverage, females must guard females unless there are more females on one of the teams (more than 2 female players during the play). Players not covering the intended female receiver must stay at least 5 yards away until a reception is made by that player; afterwards, her flag may be taken by any player. **Double coverage is not allowed on any forced gender play (one on one).**

PASS RUSH – BLOCKING:

- There is an **immediate pass rush**. However, the pass rushers are not allowed to force contact on the pass blockers (screen blocking).
- Screen blocking is allowed (arms crossed/folded behind the back or in front of the waist).
- Blocking is **NOT** allowed downfield.