



**Mandarin Sports Association  
Jacksonville, FL**

**Flag Football Rules – 2010**

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## GENERAL GAME INFORMATION

### LENGTH OF PLAYING TIME

There shall be four (4) quarters in each game with each quarter being twelve (12) minutes in length. During the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters the time clock will continue to run and will only be stopped on penalties, injuries and on official and team called time-outs. In the last two (2) minutes of each half, the clock will be stopped as defined in NCAA College football. There will be one (1) minute between quarters and five (5) minutes between each half.

### LINE OF SCRIMMAGE (LOS)

Once the referee has spotted the ball and identified the offensive LOS, a three (3) yard neutral zone will be established. If the end of a play results in the line-of-scrimmage being less than three (3) yards from either the goal line or the first down marker, then the referee will re-spot the ball three (3) yards from the applicable line. Any player rushing the Quarterback must be at least 5 Yards from the LOS.

### TWENTY-FIVE SECOND CLOCK

Once the referee has spotted the ball and all offensive players are on their side of the LOS, the offensive team will have twenty-five (25) seconds to put the ball in play.

### TIME-OUTS

Each team will be allotted two (2) time-outs per half. Each time-out will be thirty (30) seconds in length.

### IN-BOUNDS AND OUT-OF-BOUNDS

Both feet of the ball carrier must be in the field of play (fair territory) for a catch to be ruled complete. This includes the end line at the end of the end zone. Please see "Crossing the Goal Line or First Down Line" for additional information.

### CROSSING THE GOAL LINE OR FIRST DOWN LINE

A touchdown or first down will be awarded only when both feet of the ball carrier are clearly over the respective line in the field of play (fair territory) and the ball carriers flag has not been pulled. The position of the ball will in no way affect this ruling.

(Clarification: a ball carrier obtains possession of the "next zone" by having BOTH feet clearly in that zone prior to their flag being pulled. ***Crossing over or touching a pylon or any sideline marker does NOT constitute possession of a zone.***

### FIRST DOWNS

A first down is gained when a team crosses the next closest forward yard line. If a team losses yardage, it must still cross the original yard line established. A team will have a series of four (4) consecutive downs in which to advance the ball across the next closest forward yard line to obtain a new first down.

### PASSING THE BALL

All players currently in the field of play are eligible to receive passes. The offensive team is permitted to throw one (1) forward pass per play and it must occur from behind the

offensive LOS. If a player passes the ball to himself/herself, the play is immediately dead from the spot where the player passed the ball from.

## **PUNTING**

Fourth down punts must be declared by the offensive team. On declared punts, the defensive team cannot rush the kicker and they must position themselves at least nine (9) yards from the offensive LOS. The kicker must receive the ball from between the legs of the center. Quick kicks are permitted and do not have to be declared. Under any and all circumstances, quick kicks are not permitted on fourth down (penalty is 3 yards and a loss of down). Defensive rushing is allowed on quick kicks only.

## **KICK-OFF**

On a kick-off, the ball is placed on the kicking team's kick-off line (see field diagram; the kick-off line for the U5 and U6 Youth Divisions is the Mid-Field Line). The kicker may use a kicking tee or be permitted to free kick the ball. The receiving team must place its players anywhere on the field of play beyond mid-field line.

## **DOWNING A KICKED BALL**

It is illegal for any member of a kicking team to touch or down a kicked ball. The kicking team must give the receiving team at least two (2) yards to field a kicked ball before they are permitted to grab the flag of the ball carrier. The referee will automatically down a kicked ball that comes to rest.

## **FUMBLE**

Any fumble is immediately declared dead as soon as the ball hits the ground. The ball belongs to the last player that had possession and will be spotted where it first hit the ground or where the player lost possession, whichever is less. If the ball is fumbled forward, then the ball will be spotted where the ball carrier last had possession of the ball.

## **STRIPPING OR KNOCKING THE BALL FROM A BALL CARRIER**

Stripping or knocking the ball from a ball carrier is not permitted. An un-sportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed against the offending team.

## **PLAYING SHIRTS, FLAGS AND FLAG BELTS**

All playing shirts must be tucked into the pants and the entire flag belt (*if applicable*) and flags must be clearly visible. The flags must hang from the flag belt along the side of each player. If in the judgment of the referee, a shirt, which is out of the pants, interferes with a defensive player's ability to pull a flag, then the offensive player will be considered down when touched on any part of the body by the defensive player. Flag belts must hang from Velcro sewn onto players' pants at the designated location. Designated location for Velcro is centered on the outside seam of pants 1" below waistband. Use of a flag belt will only be permitted if sewn on Velcro becomes defective during or immediately preceding a game.

## **BALL CARRIER**

A ball carrier is considered down and the ball is declared dead under any of the following conditions:

1. In the event of a flag dropping without being pulled by an opposing player or a flag being pulled inadvertently, the ball carrier is considered to be down when the opposing player has touched the ball carrier with one hand on any part of the ball carriers body. (Clarification: if a referee determines that a flag is being pulled intentionally from a player who is not in possession of the ball, an un-sportsmanlike penalty can be called).
2. When any part of the ball carriers body, except for the feet or either hand, comes in direct contact with the ground.
3. When the ball comes in contact with the ground and the ball carrier has control of the ball.

## **INADVERTENT WHISTLE**

If the whistle blows inadvertently before the ball or ball carrier crosses the LOS, then the play is played over. If the whistle blows inadvertently beyond the LOS, then the offensive team will have the option of accepting the play at the time of the whistle or replaying the down. If in the judgment of the referee a ball carrier would have scored a touchdown if there had been no whistle, then a touchdown can be awarded.

## **THE CENTER**

The center cannot carry the ball from the line of scrimmage until after the ball has been clearly snapped from between the centers' legs. In addition, the ball cannot be handed back to the center between his legs. Once the ball has been clearly snapped, then the center becomes eligible for all other offensive options. (CLARIFICATION: The center shall pass the ball back from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion of the hand(s). The ball shall leave the hand(s) in this motion. This essentially negates the opportunity for the center to place the ball on his/her back or to suspend it in mid-air for another player to come, parallel to the line of scrimmage, and get the ball. The snap must be continuous and exchanged in a single motion.)

## **RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR THE CENTER POSITION**

Once the ball has been cleanly snapped from between the center's legs, the center will have a Right-of-Way that is perpendicular to the offensive LOS for a distance not to exceed the neutral zone. The center is NOT permitted to leave the offensive LOS except when running in the Right-of-Way or when all initial rushers have crossed the neutral zone. The center is not permitted to block except for a stationary screen. No defensive player is permitted to enter into the center's Right-of-Way unless the center is beyond the neutral zone.

## **DEAD BALL**

Any lateral, fumble or incomplete backward pass that makes contact with the ground is a dead ball. The ball is spotted where the ball first made contact with the ground. This rule will also apply to center snaps.

## **BALL PLACEMENT**

Once the offensive line of scrimmage has been established, the referee will place the ball as close to the center of the field as possible.

## **NUMBER OF PLAYERS**

Each team will be permitted to field a maximum of four (4) players at any one time. All other rules apply.

No game will start or proceed unless each team has a minimum number of players equal to one less than the maximum allowed per division.

## **NUMBER OF PLAYERS ON THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE (LOS)**

**Offense:** There must be at least two (2) players on the offensive LOS and one of those players must be the center. The maximum number of players permitted on the offensive LOS is one (1) less than the number of offensive players playing at that time.

**Defense:** There can be no more than three (3) players on the defensive LOS. Any and all defensive players can rush but cannot do so until the ball has been snapped. There is no minimum number of defensive players that must be on the defensive LOS.

## **OFFENSIVE ON-FIELD COACH**

Only one (1) offensive coach is permitted on the field at any one time. Prior to the snap of the ball, this coach must be positioned at least five (5) yards from the deepest offensive player and must maintain this distance throughout the play. The offensive on-field coach is not permitted forward of the LOS until the play has ended and is not permitted to verbalize any instructions to any player during a play.

## **DEFENSIVE ON-FIELD COACH**

Only one (1) defensive coach is permitted on the field at any one time. Prior to the snap of the ball, this coach must be positioned at least ten (10) yards from the deepest defensive player. Once the play has started, the defensive field coach must maintain a position of at least ten (10) yards behind the deepest offensive or defensive player. If the offensive team is within 15 yards of the goal line, the defensive coach must position himself/herself out of the end zone. The defensive field coach must maintain his/her position until after the play has ended. In addition, this coach cannot verbalize any instructions to any player during a play.

## **EQUIPMENT**

1. Each team is given at least one game ball of official size and weight. Prior to the start of a game, each team will be required to validate their game ball with the Head Referee. Any game ball that does not meet the minimum size and weight dimensions that are required by each division, cannot not be used during league games. Ball sizes by division are as follows:

- 7 and Under (7U) **Pee Wee**
- 10 and Under (10U) **Junior**
- 15 and Under (15U) **Youth**

2. Colors between flags and pants/shorts must be contrasting.

3. Player gloves, hats (with brims pointed to the back) and head-wraps are permitted.

4. Spikes or metal cleats of any kind are strictly prohibited.

5. In the event that two teams have similar colored jersey tops, one team will be required to wear league-provided Penney's. A coin toss will determine which team will wear the Penney's with the winner having their choice.

6. Jewelry of any type (metallic, plastic or elastic) is not permitted. The only exceptions are Medical Alert tags, which must be taped to the body and cannot be exposed outside the uniform. Team coaches are responsible to notify the Head Referee that a player is wearing a Medical Alert tag.

7. The Head Referee has the option to remove any equipment, player apparel or request that a player cut their finger nails if, in his/her opinion, it presents an unsafe playing condition. The ruling made by the Head Referee is final.

8. Mouthpieces are required for all players.

## **TIEBREAKERS**

Regular season games can end in a tie. Playoff games that end in a tie will use the "Kansas City Tie Breaker Format" to determine the winner.

## **FOULS AND PENALTIES**

1. If any major infraction occurs by the defensive team and the original offensive LOS is or was in the red zone, then the ball will be placed half the distance between the existing LOS and the goal line and a first down is awarded to the offensive team.

2. If any major infraction occurs by the defensive team and the result of the play was an offensive touchdown, then the touchdown is awarded and the penalty is assessed on the kick-off.

## **OFFSIDE, FALSE START, ILLEGAL SHIFT PENALTY**

3 YARDS FROM LOS

Dead ball foul if committed by the offensive team. The defensive man can enter into the neutral zone and return to his/her side of the line prior to the snap and no penalty will be called provided that no contact has been made on the part of the defensive player.

## **DELAY OF GAME PENALTY**

3 YARDS FROM LOS

This is a violation of the twenty-five (25) second clock.

## **SUBSTITUTIONS PENALTY**

3 YARDS FROM LOS

All substitutions must report to the referee and be positioned inside the sideline referees prior to the start of a play.

## **360-DEGREE SPIN PENALTY**

3 YARDS (spot foul/loss of down)

A ball carrier is not permitted to spin 360 degrees to avoid the flag from being pulled. The penalty is assessed at the point of the infraction. A ball carrier is permitted to twist from side to side up to 180 degrees to avoid the tackler. No defensive options.

## **GUARDING FLAGS/STIFF ARMING PENALTY**

3 YARDS (spot foul/loss of down)

Ball is down at the point of the infraction. No defensive options and loss of down occurs.

## **ILLEGAL DOWNING OF A KICKED BALL PENALTY**

3 YARDS (spot foul)

It is illegal for any member of the kicking team to down or touch a kicked ball. See "Receiving Team Two Yard Rule" for further clarification.

## **RECEIVING TEAM TWO (2) YARD RULE PENALTY**

3 YARDS FROM END OF PLAY

The kicking team must give at least a two (2) yard radius to any member of the receiving team that is in position to receive a kicked ball.

## **HURDLING/JUMPING PENALTY**

3 YARDS

Hurdling or jumping by any player is illegal unless the player is trying to avoid another player who is lying on the ground. If a ball carrier violates this rule, then the ball is down at the point of the infraction and the penalty is assessed. No defensive options and loss of down occurs. If a defensive player violates this rule, then the penalty will be assessed at the end of the play.

## **DIVING PENALTY**

3 YARDS

Any offensive player diving for yardage or extending the ball across a line is illegal. The ball is down at the point of the infraction and the penalty is assessed. No defensive options and a loss of down will occur. It is illegal for any defensive player to dive to obtain the ball carriers flag. A penalty will be assessed at the end of the play.

## **ON-FIELD COACH INTERFERENCE PENALTY**

3 YARDS

If the offensive or defensive on-field coach interferes with the flow of the play or verbalizes any instructions to his/her players, an On-Field Coach Interference penalty will be called.

If a subsequent On-Field Coach Interference penalty is assessed to the same team, the referee has the option of issuing an Un-sportsmanlike Conduct penalty on the offending team.

## **FOULS AND PENALTIES (major infractions)**

### **TACKLING/TRIPPING/HOLDING PENALTY**

7 YARDS

It is illegal for any player to tackle, trip or hold any other player regardless of the situation.

If the violation is on the defensive team, then the penalty will be added onto the end of the play. If the violation is on the offensive team, then the penalty will be assessed from the spot of the foul and a loss of down occurs.

## **BLOCKING PENALTY**

7 YARDS

The only legal block that is permitted is a stationary screen. A moving screen is illegal. The screening player(s) must remain still as the defenders approach the ball carrier. The screener must set his/her screen at least three (3) yards or approximately two (2) running strides from a defender. The screener must keep his/her arms and hands straight down by his/her sides. No part of the screener's body, except the feet, shall be in contact with the ground throughout the screen. Sticking a knee, hip, foot, or elbow out to make contact is an illegal block.

If the violation is on the defensive team, then the penalty will be added onto the end of the play. If the violation is on the offensive team, then the penalty will be assessed from the spot of the foul and a loss of down occurs.

## **ROUGHING THE PASSER PENALTY**

7 YARDS

Under no circumstances is the offensive passer to be touched above the waist, regardless of whether or not the defender has actually touched or battered down the ball. The intent of this rule is to avoid injuries to the passer. The defender's objective is to down the passer by pulling the passer's flag.

When this penalty occurs, the offensive team is given the choice of accepting the play or replaying the down. Under all circumstances, seven (7) yards will be awarded to the offensive team from either the LOS or from the end of the play.

## **PUSHING/ROUGHING PENALTY**

7 YARDS

It is illegal for any player to push or rough any other player regardless of the situation.

If the violation is on the defensive team, then the penalty will be added onto the end of the play. If the violation is on the offensive team, then the penalty will be assessed from the spot of the foul and a loss of down occurs.

## **RUNNING OVER A PLAYER/CHARGING PENALTY**

7 YARDS

It will be the decision of the referee as to whether a player is intentionally trying to run over and charge another player. The offensive player is considered at fault if the defensive player has clearly established and maintained a position. The ball carrier must run to evade „tacklers“. Defensive players should not set up to purposefully draw a charge. „Brushing“ and unavoidable contact is not charging and no penalty will be called.

If the violation is on the defensive team, then the penalty will be added onto the end of the play. If the violation is on the offensive team, then the penalty will be assessed from the spot of the foul and a loss of down occurs.

### **DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE PENALTY**

7 YDS FROM LOS/FIRST DOWN

If the penalty is accepted on behalf of the offensive team, then the seven (7) yards are marked off from the line of scrimmage and a first down is awarded.

### **OFFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE PENALTY**

7 YDS FROM LOS/DOWN LOSS

If the penalty is accepted on behalf of the defensive team, then the seven (7) yards are marked off from the line of scrimmage and the offensive team loses a down. If the penalty occurs on the fourth down, then the penalty is marked off from the line of scrimmage and the ball is awarded to the defensive team.

### **UN-SPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT PENALTY**

7 YDS FROM END OF PLAY

Un-sportsmanlike conduct of any kind including "stripping or knocking the ball from a ball carrier", flagrant fouls, cursing, yelling at officials, spectators or opponents, fighting or behaving in any manner deemed inappropriate by the referee, will result in the assessment of this penalty against the offending party. If an individual is assessed two Un-sportsmanlike Conduct penalties during the course of a game, then that individual will be ejected from the field of play. See Individual Ejection Rule for clarification.

### **INDIVIDUAL EJECTION RULE PENALTY**

The Team Manager has the ultimate responsibility for the behavior of his/her team players, coaches and spectators before, during and immediately after games. If an individual associated with a team is ejected *FOR ANY REASON*, then that individual must leave the field of play and park grounds immediately or the game will be forfeited. Any pre-game, game or post-game behavior deemed inappropriate by any one of the game referees or observed by any league official, coach, player or parent can result in the assessment of this penalty.

### **ILLEGAL ON-FIELD PRESENCE PENALTY**

See Un-sportsmanlike Conduct

Team Managers, Coaches, Players and Referees are the only individuals permitted on the field-of-play during the actual Game Event. The Game Event is defined as being 5 minutes prior to scheduled game time through the point when the referee indicates that game time is over. Any individuals not identified above must receive specific permission from the Head Referee to come onto the field-of-play. Any violation of this rule will result in the assessment of an Un-sportsmanlike penalty and the referee has the additional option of assessing the Individual Ejection Rule.

## **SCORING**

### **TOUCHDOWN**

Six (6) points

### **EXTRA POINT**

After a touchdown has been made, the offensive team must declare whether they are going for a one (1) or two (2) point Extra Point (see below). Once declared, the offensive team cannot change their decision unless an offensive team time-out is granted. If the defensive team intercepts the ball during the extra point try, the defensive team will be awarded two (2) points if they are able to cross their respective goal line without being downed.

If the offensive team declares that they are going for one (1), the ball will be placed on three (3) yard line for the extra point try. If the offensive team declares that they are going for two (2), the ball will be placed on the ten (10) yard line for the extra point try. In either case, the offensive team can run or pass the ball in an attempt to successfully cross the goal line and be awarded the appropriate extra points.

### **SAFETY**

Two (2) points

After the defensive team has made a safety, the offensive team will be required to kick-off to the defensive team from the kick-off line.