

Walton County
Parks & Recreation Department
Youth Flag Football – General Rules & Regulations
Revised: August 17th, 2020

Governing Body:

The Walton County Parks & Recreation Department will make all final decisions concerning league rules, age control dates, rule interpretations, scheduling (practice sessions & games), officials, registration fees, protest, team drafts, or any matter concerning the youth football league.

Leagues

- 7-8, 9-10, 11-12 year old divisions (may be combined to form adequate league play)
- Age Control Date: August 31st of current year

Coaches

- All coaches must complete a Criminal History Check prior to start of season.
- Head coach or Assistant coach must be present at league introductory rules meeting.

General

Attire/ Equipment (Inspections will be made prior to games by Referees or field supervisor)

- Players are encouraged to wear cleats but are not required. No metal cleats allowed.
- **All players must wear a protective mouthpiece.**
- All players must wear their shirt tucked into their shorts/pants.
- Players must wear flags properly – flags must hang at sides and belts should be properly secured – never tied or tucked into pants.
- Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
- Shorts cannot have pockets or belt loops.

Possession

- A coin toss determines first possession, **with no option to defer**. Loser of the coin toss has choice of end zone to defend. The team that loses the coin toss gets possession at the beginning of the second half, starting at its own 5-yard line.
- **The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four plays to cross the 20 yard line. Once a team crosses the 20 yard line, it has four plays to cross the 40 yard line. Once a team crosses the 40 yard line, it has four plays to score a touchdown (marked at the defending team's 20 yard line).** All possession changes (exception: interceptions), start on the 5-yard line of the offense.
- Teams change sides at half time.

Time

- Game length is two 20-minute halves for a total of 40 minutes. **Halftime is 4 minutes.** Time will be kept by the referees or designated clock keeper. The clock shall run continuously outside of the final 2 minutes of each half (exception: change of possession & timeout).
- Each time the ball is spotted the offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
- Each team has two 60-second time outs per half. The clock shall stop during all time outs. Unused time outs in the first half may not be carried into the second half.
- **A 2 minute warning will be issued during each half by the referee. During this time, the clock will stop on out of bounds plays, incomplete passes, change of possession, and enforcement of penalties.**
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion
- In the event of an injury the clock will stop and restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play

Scoring

- **Touchdown:** 6 points
- **Extra point:** 1 point (One play from 2-yard line) – Must be a designed pass play
2 points (One play from 5-yard line) – Pass or run play
 - Extra points may be returned by the defense (via interception) for 2 points if they reach the end zone.
- **Safety:** 2 points
 - A Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. A player may be called down when his/her flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds, or they hit the ground with their knee/arm.

Running

- To start the play, the ball must be snapped from the ground at the line of scrimmage. This may be between the legs or to the side of the center.
- The center cannot take a direct handoff back from the quarterback (no center sneak play).
- The quarterback is the player who receives the ball directly from the snap. The quarterback must be the only player behind center.
- The quarterback cannot run with the ball past the line of scrimmage after receiving the snap from the center, **unless he/she is being rushed by the defense**. The quarterback is eligible to catch a pass or have the ball handed back to them and then run.
- Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed.
- "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 run the ball.
- Multiple direct hand-offs are permitted behind the line of scrimmage. Handoff may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player.
- The player who takes the toss or hand-off can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- All defensive players are eligible to rush once the ball has been handed off or tossed.
- Spinning is allowed, but offensive players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player.
- A teammate may not run in front of, or beside, the ball carrier. This will result in a blocking penalty.
- Runners may not dive to advance the ball.
- Runners must make every attempt to avoid a collision with another player.
- **Flag Obstruction** – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding. If the ball carrier's flags are out of position (not placed on the sides)...they will be declared down at the spot that a defender attempts to pull the flag.

Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- One player may be in motion at the snap. The center shall never be in motion.
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception to receive credit.
- A receiver cannot return on to the playing field from an out of bounds position and catch the ball.
- A simultaneous catch or recovery is a catch in which there is joint possession of a live ball by opposing players who are inbounds. The ball will be blown dead at that spot and possession will be awarded to the offense.

Passing

- A player who takes a toss or handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has seven seconds to throw the ball. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead, loss of down and the ball is spotted at the previous line of scrimmage.
 - Once the ball is handed off or tossed, the seven-second rule no longer is in effect.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball.

- The defense **can** return interceptions.
- If an interception occurs and remains in the end zone, a touchback will be declared and will result in the ball belonging to the intercepting team at its 5-yard line. Should an interception occur in the end zone and the ball carrier leaves 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.
- Players are ineligible to catch a pass if their flag has fallen off.
- Shovel passes are allowed.

Dead Balls

- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - Official blows the whistle. (For inadvertent whistle see Referees/Penalties)
 - Ball carrier's flag is pulled or becomes illegal.
 - Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - Touchdown or safety is scored.
 - When any part of the ball carrier's body, other than a hand or foot, touches the ground.
 - If the ball carrier's flag falls off, the play will be whistled dead and the ball will be spotted at the spot where the flag fell off.
- **Note: There are no fumbles.** The ball will be spotted where the ball carrier's feet were when the fumble was made. A bad snap will be blown dead and the ball will be spotted where it hit the ground. There is no stripping of the ball.

Sportsmanship/Roughing

- Absolutely no tackling is allowed.
- If the referee witnesses acts of flagrant contact, tackling, elbowing, hits from behind, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game without warning.
- Negative comments will not be tolerated. (Comments that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, or spectators.) Officials have the right to determine offensive language.

General Game Rules

- **# of players:** 8 players shall be on the field for each team. A minimum of 5 players are required to begin a game.
- **Player Pickups:** A team that has **fewer** than 8 active players may temporarily add players from other teams in order to field 8 players (regular season only). Pickups will not be allowed for rosters of 8 players or more. All pickups must be approved by both the Recreation Staff and the opposing coach.
- **Ball size:** A junior sized football shall be used.
- **Minimum playing time:** Every player must play at least half of the game; no healthy player shall sit for consecutive series on offense or defense.
- **Rushing:** Defensive players must start 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage to rush the quarterback. This will be marked by the referee. An offside penalty will be declared if a defensive player rushes the quarterback after having started within 7 yards off the line.
- **Overtime:** A game that ends in a tie will immediately move to overtime play. There will be a coin toss, with the winner taking the ball first and no option to defer. Each team will be given the ball at midfield and have 4 downs to score. If both teams remain tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime period shall be played. In the second period, a 2 point conversion is required upon scoring a touchdown. If the score remains tied after the second overtime period, the game shall end and be declared a tie (exception: playoffs).
- **Mercy Rule:** Mercy shall be declared when a team obtains a lead equal to or higher than 25 points. At this point the losing team will be given the option to end the game immediately or finish out under a continuous running clock (NO clock stoppages, including timeouts and change of possession).

Referees/Penalties

(All penalties are 5 yards with the exception of Pass Interference, which is 15 yards) (Loss of down will also be noted, otherwise it is repeat down)

General

- All penalties can be declined.
- Penalties will not exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line from the line of scrimmage.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Judgment calls cannot be appealed.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty.
- In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down is consumed.
 - Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

Defensive Penalties (SOF= Spot of Foul; LOS= Line of Scrimmage)

- Offside (**SOF**)
- Pass Interference (**LOS**)
- Illegal contact (holding, blocking, etc.) (**SOF**)
- Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball) (**SOF**)
- Illegal rushing (starting rush from inside 7 or 10-yard marker) (**LOS**)
- Substitution fouls (player enters field after ball is blown ready for play, i.e. to deceive opponents, or 8 players on the field) (**LOS**)
- Disconcerting signals (distracts opponent or simulates offensive signals prior to snap) (**LOS**)
- Interference with opponent or ball at the snap (**LOS**)

Offensive Penalties

- Delay of game (**LOS**)
- Substitution fouls (**LOS**)
- False Start (**LOS**)
- Illegal Snap (**LOS**)
- Offensive holding (**LOS**)
- Illegal shift or failure to pause for one second (**LOS**)
- Player out of bounds (if player goes out of bounds, player cannot return to the field and catch ball)
- Illegal forward pass (pass received behind line of scrimmage) (**Loss of down**) (**LOS**)
- Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender) (**Loss of down**) (**LOS**)
- Flag guarding (**Loss of down**) (**SOF**)

Coaches

- Only three coaches per team are allowed on the sideline during the game. Only the head coach can talk to referee or ask for rules clarification. (All coaches must provide a background check form to the WCRD)
- One Offensive Coach and One Defensive Coach are allowed on the field to direct players and assist in play call in order to keep the pace of the game. **Coaches must clear off to the sideline surface prior to the ball being snapped.**

Rushing the Passer

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.

- a. **A legal rush is:**
 - Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7 yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
- b. **A penalty may be called if:**
 - The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass.

Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).

- If a defensive player that crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Offside (5 yards LOS and first down).
- If a defensive player that is not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).
- c. **Special circumstances:**
 - Teams are not required to rush the quarterback.
 - Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play, however if they do send a rusher, the rusher must verify that they are in the correct position 7 yards from the ball.
 - If rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as defender with no offside penalty enforced.
- Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in anyway. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty. Defender hand contacting the ball while in the QB's hand is considered contacting the QB and shall be declared a penalty. A blocked pass after it leaves the QB's hand is a dead ball while behind the LOS and a live ball once it passes the LOS in the air (the ball can be caught by offensive or defensive player if it has crossed the LOS).
- The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way while the QB is in the pocket. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the "path or line" is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.
- A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when flag is pulled.
 - A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

Flag Pulling

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- **Flag guarding** is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

Formations

- Offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to five players on the line of scrimmage total. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage. At least one player (in addition to the quarterback) must be in the backfield.
- One player at a time may go in motion at least 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
- Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.

Field Dimensions

- Playing surface shall be 80 yards long (60 yard field and 2 10-yard end zones), with 2 1st down markers at the 20 and 40 yard lines. Width shall be from the left sideline to the right hash mark (approximately 35 yards). A five yard line will be marked in front of each end zone and declared a “no run zone”.

Playing Field Diagram

