

FLAG FOOTBALL

Rules

Flag Football is played with 7 on-field players per team.

The team that has possession of the ball is termed the offence and the team that doesn't is called the defence.

The offence has four downs to obtain 15 yards, keep possession of the ball and attempt to score. If they fail to gain 15 yards and a first down, the ball goes to the defence and they, in turn, become the offence and have four downs to obtain 15 yards, keep possession of the ball and attempt to score.

To begin a game, a team will kick off from their own 45 yd kick-off line. To be a legal kick-off the ball must travel 20 yards towards the receiving team's before it is touched by a member of the kicking team. It is an illegal procedure penalty if the ball is touched by a member of the kicking team prior to it traveling 20 yards downfield or if it does not travel the 20 yards downfield, unless it is touched first by a member of the receiving team.

Game Play

To begin the series of four downs, the ball is placed on the ground at the point the ball carrier was flagged on the kick-off. This marks the line of scrimmage. All offensive players must take a position on or behind the line of scrimmage. All defensive players must take a position at least one yard from the line of scrimmage on the opposite side. A player designated as the centre will then begin the play by snapping the ball between the legs to the quarterback who must receive the ball at least five yards behind the line of scrimmage. A minimum of 5 players on the offence must be on the line of scrimmage prior to the snap. All players on the offence, except the centre, are allowed to be in motion after the ball is set and prior to the snap. Movement at the snap by offensive players can only be laterally, or toward their goal line. Receivers are not permitted to cross the line of scrimmage until after the snap.

The game is mainly a passing game with all players on the offence being eligible receivers. There is no blocking permitted. The play is terminated when a defender flags the ball carrier.

During scrimmage plays the defence will have one or more players, called the rusher(s), pursue the quarterback after the ball is snapped. The rusher has specific rules, which govern this position. They include being at least five yards away from the line of scrimmage and within five yards to the left or right of the rushing bag at the time the ball is snapped. The rusher must also take a position such that no part of the centre's body lies directly between the rusher and the quarterback. In turn, the rules grant the rusher a direct and unobstructed path to the quarterback after the ball is snapped. No one is permitted to block or obstruct the rusher in any way. Teams may use more than one rusher on a play. All rushers have the right to a clear and direct path to the quarterback provided they adhere to the rusher rules stated above. The first player on the defence to cross the line of scrimmage must have started from a point five yards from the line of scrimmage.

The officials use beanbags to mark the line of scrimmage; the rusher's starting point and

the first down line.

There are no fumbles in flag football. All fumbles are blown dead as soon as the ball strikes the ground. Only two types of muffs are allowed. One is when the quarterback muffs the exchange from centre and the other is when a player muffs the kick-off in an onside or offside direction. When a ball is fumbled or muffed, including an incomplete attempted lateral or hand-off, the play is blown dead and the ball is placed at the point where it first touched the ground, if in an onside direction, or at the point it was last touched, if in an offside direction, i.e. in the least advantageous position for the team that causes the fumble/muff.

Scoring

Points are awarded for touchdowns, converts and safety touches.

A touchdown (6 pts) is scored when a team gets the ball into the opponent's end zone by running with the ball across the goal line or by gaining possession of the ball in the end zone through a completed pass from a team mate.

After a touchdown, the scoring team has the choice of attempting a 1 point convert from the five-yard line or a 2 point convert from the ten-yard line. All converts must be passing or running plays. Kicking is not permitted on convert attempts.

A safety touch counts for two points and is awarded to a team when their opponents cause the ball to go into their own end zone and the play is ruled dead prior to the ball being brought out of the end zone.

Passing

All players are eligible to receive a forward pass. There can be only one forward pass on each scrimmage play. A forward pass is one where the ball is intentionally thrown or handed towards the opponent's goal line. A forward pass is legal, if it is the first pass thrown (either overhand or underhand) and must originate from behind the line of scrimmage. A forward pass cannot be legally thrown on a kick-off return or punt return.

A pass is incomplete when the ball touches the ground, the goal post, an official, or lands out of bounds.

A receiver may "spin" (360 degrees) at any time to advert a defender, however, the player cannot maintain a continuous spinning motion down the field.

If a pass is intercepted in the end zone, no points are awarded and the team that intercepted the ball is awarded first down on their own 10-yard line.

If a ball carrier touches the ground with any part of their body apart from their feet i.e., a 'third point down', the play is whistled dead at that point. If this occurs behind the line of scrimmage it is a sack.

Punts

Teams may punt the ball on any play and in doing so they give up possession of the ball to the receiving team. A player may only punt the ball from behind the line of scrimmage. The members of the punting team must be at least two yards from the ball when it is first touched by a member of the receiving team. Failure to do so will result in a ten yard "no

yards” penalty. If the ball touches the punt receiver then goes forward or backwards and hits the ground, the play will be whistled dead. If a punt is blocked by the defensive team, the play is dead when the ball hits the ground or is caught by a member of the kicking team and the non-kicking team takes possession at the point the ball was blocked regardless of what down it was at the time.

Flagging

Spinning is not considered flag guarding.

A ball carrier must not guard his/her flags by running with hands below the waist in such a manner as to prevent a defender from reaching any of his/her flags even if the blockage occurred as a result of a natural running motion.

Guarding a flag, by a ball carrier is a 10-yard penalty which is applied from the point of the foul and the play is whistled dead at that point. If first down had been achieved before the flag guarding took place a first down will be credited. If a quarterback or any other offensive player guards their flags behind the line of scrimmage, the play will be whistled dead and a 5 yard penalty will be applied from the point of the infraction. Players must take responsibility for making sure no part of their uniform (including their pants, draw strings, jersey, etc.) hangs below their waste at the time of the snap. Infractions of this type will be subject to a 5-yard illegal procedure penalty.

A player not in possession of the ball cannot be flagged.

Penalties

Flag Guarding - Any player in possession of the ball that uses any part of their arm, hand etc. to block the defender from obtaining their flag will have the play blown dead at the point of the infraction and a 10 yard penalty assessed with loss of down. If a first down was gained before the infraction occurred, it will stand. Flag guarding behind the line of scrimmage will be assessed as a 5-yard penalty from the point of the infraction. Flag guarding in the end zone is a safety touch.

Illegal Procedure – Illegal procedure occurs when:

- a) An offensive player attacks the line as the ball is being snapped or crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the ball being snapped.
- b) The centre does not snap the ball between his/her legs.
- c) The quarterback does not receive the snap 5 yards back of the line of scrimmage.
- d) There are fewer than 5 players on the line of scrimmage prior to the snap.
- e) A player has improper equipment hanging below his/her waste at the time of the snap.
- f) If a defensive player makes contact with an offensive player on the offensive side of the ball before the snap.

In each case, a 5-yard illegal procedure penalty is assessed with no loss of down.

FLAG FOOTBALL FIELD DIAGRAM

Posts must be padded

Boys football,
or field hockey
side lines

Flag football end
zone is only 10 yds.
deep, and is lined
the same colour as
the flag football
sidelines

Flag football
side lines
marked in a
different colour

Cones placed
at the 45 yd
lines, or 10
yds from
centre, to
indicate
where kick-
off occurs

GOAL

10 Yds

20 Yds

30 Yds

40 Yds

50 Yds

Center

50 Yds

40 Yds

30 Yds

20 Yds

10 Yds

GOAL

Flag football field is 54 yds
wide, and is centred on the
football uprights, or soccer
goal, if such exist.