

2017 Season Guidelines & Rules

These guidelines & rules for all 5v5 non-contact flag football play in Nova Scotia have been summarized / modified from The Canadian Rule Book for Flag Football 2009 adopted by Football Canada as well as any rules that were modified for play in the Canadian U16 / U18 National Championships (all changes, modifications, clarifications & enforcements for play in 2017 are highlighted in yellow).

Player Attire / Equipment:

- * All players must wear an intra-oral mouthpiece with no part sticking out.
- * Players of the same team shall wear full length jerseys of the same color / design issued by the league & must be tucked into their pants or shorts.
- * Players must wear pants or shorts of the same solid color / design without belt loops, loose strings, press studs or clips & it is highly recommended that they not have pockets. Players cannot tape or secure their pants or shorts to meet this regulation.
- * Players may wear footwear with rubber tip cleats, running shoes, turf shoes or sneakers.
- * Players are not allowed footwear with cleats longer than .5 inch, metal studs or track spikes.
- * Players may wear gloves, finger tape, play wristbands & non-metal braces.
- * Players may wear prescription glasses fitted with an elasticized sports band.
- * Players are not allowed any non-prescription sunglasses or jewelry including earrings, necklaces, rings, watches, bracelets, etc.
- * Players are not allowed to wear baseball caps, visors, hoods, helmets or similar, however headbands & bandanas may be allowed based on approval by the game officials.
- * Players are not allowed any uniform attachments such as towels, hand warmers, play cards, play books or play sheets, players may only wear playbook wristbands.
- * Cloth flags or flag belts with Velcro or Flag-a-Tag Sonic Boom Flag Belts popper-flags will be worn by players & every effort must be made to keep one flag on each hip aligned with the outside of their legs / seams of their shorts or pants at all times. Flags must be clearly visible, hang down freely & must not be covered in any way by a player's uniform. Flags must be a different color than player's pants or shorts. Flags must not be altered, cut, glued or changed in any way & if a player is caught with manipulated flags they will be ejected from the game. Cloth flags require that a minimum of 2 inches / three fingers of the white portion of the flag is showing at all times when tucked in. Popper flags must be worn so that the socket that holds the flag extends away from the player's body.

Field Equipment & Layout:

- * For the Men's, Women's, Midget / U18 & Junior / U20 divisions the field dimensions are 70 yards in total length & 25 yards in total width including two 10 yard end zones, two 5 yard no run zones in front of the end zones & a 25 yard midfield line.
- * For all the Bantam / U16 or younger divisions the field dimensions are 60 yards in total length & 25 yards in total width including two 10 yard end zones, two 5 yard no run zones in front of the end zones & a 20 yard midfield line.
- * Disk cones will be used around the perimeter of the field to mark the 5 yard no run zone lines, the 5 yard from midfield team area lines, the midfield line & the back line of the end zones while 6 inch cones will be used to mark the corners of the end zones.
- * Bean bags are used to mark Line of Scrimmage & the 7 yard rush line.
- * Teams will be designated to one sideline of the field by officials & the coaches / players must stay on their side of the field as well as in their designated team areas which are defined as 5 yards from midfield to the 5 yard no run zone) for the duration of game.
- * Teams & spectators are required to be on opposite sides of the field during game.
- * For youth leagues or tournaments, the following footballs will be used for game play: U8 Mites + U10 Atoms - Spalding Rookie | U12 Peewee - Spalding Rookie + J5J | U14 Bantam – Spalding J5J + J5Y | U16 Midget – Spalding J5Y / J5V | U18 Junior – Spalding J5Y / J5V | U20 Elite

Spalding J5Y / J5V. For the MYFFL | metro Youth Flag Football League or tournaments the officials will provide game balls.

- * For adult and / or senior leagues or tournaments teams can use any type of football that is equivalent in size to the Spalding J5Y for women & Spalding J5V for men. For the MMFFL | Metro Men's Flag Football League & the MWFFL | Metro Women's Flag Football League the teams will typically use their own footballs.

Possession:

- * The winner of the coin toss at the start of the game gets the ball first, while the loser gets their choice of end zone to defend plus possession of the ball at the start of the second half.
- * There are no kickoffs, the offensive team takes possession of the ball on its 5 yard line & has 3 plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has 3 plays to score a touchdown. If the offense team fails to cross midfield or score a touchdown, the ball changes possession & the new offensive team takes over the ball at its own 5 yard line. An automatic first down by penalty will overrule the requirement of 3 plays to either make a first down or score.
- * All possession changes, except for interceptions start on the offensive team's 5 yard line.
- * Teams will switch / change ends on the field at the start of the 2nd half.

Number of Players:

- * Teams will typically consist of 8 – 12 players, with 5 on the field at a time.
- * Teams may play with a minimum of 4 players, however if less than 4 players are available then the game will be forfeited and / or cancelled. For all leagues in the spirit of Fair Play it is expected that both teams would play 4v4 in this situation.

Game Timing:

- * The duration of the game is typically 45 to 50 minutes long with two halves of 20 minutes running time & a 2 minute halftime. The game clock does not stop except for team or official's timeout, injury timeout or at the discretion of the officials.
- * Games will be managed by officials to ensure they are completed 5 minutes before the next scheduled game starts. Officials will keep coaches informed of any game timing changes.
- * A team that is not ready to play within 5 minutes of the scheduled game start time will lose all of their timeouts for the game & the game time will be adjusted accordingly to ensure it finishes on time. If a team is not ready within 15 minutes, then they will forfeit the game.
- * Teams & coaches are verbally notified when there is 2 minutes left to play in each half, officials will stop the clock to make the announcement & the clock will start with the next snap of the ball.
- * The offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball once it is spotted & the play is whistled in by the officials. Officials will verbally indicate when 10 seconds are remaining if play has not started.
- * Each team has two 60 second timeouts per half which cannot be carried forward.
- * During the regular season, there will be no extra game time / overtime to declare a winner & the game shall remain tied.

Extra Game Time / Overtime:

- * During playoffs or tournaments when a winner must be declared overtime will be played.
- * There will be a 2 minute break before overtime starts, a coin toss will determine first possession & there are no team timeouts.
- * Each team will get one play to score an Extra Point Try from the 5 yard line for 1 point at one end of the field as chosen by the official(s). If the game is still tied after each team has completed their play, the situation will continue until a winner is declared. A turnover cannot be returned to an opponent's end zone to score points during overtime & officials will whistle the play dead.

Scoring:

- * Touchdown – 6 Points
- * Extra Point Try from 5 yard line – 1 Point
- * Extra Point Try from 12 yard line – 2 Points
- * Safety – 2 points + Ball Possession

- * Interception return on Extra Point Try to opponent's end zone – 2 points + Ball Possession

General Rules:

- * A maximum of two coaches per team will be allowed on the field at any time.
- * After a change of possession, a time out or a change of sides the officials will ensure that both teams are ready before the play is whistled in.
- * The Center is the player who gives the ball to the Quarterback.
- * The Quarterback is the player who receives & gains possession of the ball from the Center.
- * To start the play, the ball is snapped by the Center between their legs either directly or through the air to the Quarterback.
- * The Center cannot take a direct handoff back from the Quarterback (Center sneak play).
- * The Quarterback cannot run with the ball past the Line of Scrimmage unless they have given the ball away to another player behind the Line of Scrimmage & received it back.
- * The Quarterback has 7 seconds to throw the ball & the play is blown dead if it is not thrown within this time. However, if the ball is handed off, tossed or passed laterally or on a fake hand off, toss or lateral pass to another offensive player the 7 second rule will no longer be in effect.
- * All offensive players except for the Center & the Quarterback can be in motion in any direction at time of the snap.
- * An offense may use multiple handoffs behind the Line of Scrimmage, but only parallel, lateral or backward handoffs, tosses or passes are allowed.
- * Once a player crosses or receives a pass beyond the Line of Scrimmage they are not allowed to handoff, toss, lateral or pass the ball.
- * No Running Zones are located 5 yards from each end zone & when the ball is on or inside the 5 yard line the offense cannot run the ball. Any handoffs, tosses, laterals or fake handoffs, tosses or laterals will result in an Illegal Run penalty.
- * Any player who receives a handoff, toss or lateral pass behind the Line of Scrimmage can throw the ball while they are behind the Line of Scrimmage.
- * Spinning to avoid a flag pull is allowed by the ball carrier, however jumping which is defined as gaining extra height as compared to their regular running is not.
- * Diving, defined as intentionally leaving one's feet & extending their body forward with both feet leaving the ground by an offensive player to avoid a flag pull or advance the ball is not allowed.
- * The ball will be spotted where a ball carrier's hips are when a player's flag(s) are pulled, goes out of bounds or is considered down by contact with the ground.
- * All players are eligible to receive passes including the Quarterback if they have given the ball away behind the Line of Scrimmage.
- * A player receiving a ball requires one foot or some part of their body in bounds on their first contact with the field.
- * If a player goes out of bounds they cannot return to the field of play to receive the ball unless they were forced out by an opponent & return immediately to the field.
- * Defensive players must line up at least 1 yard away from the Line of Scrimmage for all plays.
- * Defensive players are not allowed to line up directly over the Centre to prevent them from moving forward or having a free release.
- * If the spot of the ball at the end of a play is closer than 1 yard to the goal line the ball will always be placed on the 1 yard line for the next play.
- * Defensive players rushing / blitzing the passer must start at a minimum of 7 yards from the Line of Scrimmage as marked with a bean bag. They can start anywhere behind the 7 yards & if they are within 2 yards side to side of the 7 yard bean bag before the snap they have a right of way to the Quarterback. The right of way means that offensive players cannot interfere with the rusher's direct path to the Quarterback.
- * Rushers cannot line up directly on top of the 7 yard rush line bean bag, they must choose / position themselves on one side or the other & they must be a minimum of 12 inches away from it.
- * Rushers must avoid contact with the Quarterback's upper body or the ball while it is in their hand at all times as they should be going for the flags. Any accidental or deliberate contact other than going for the flags will result in an Illegal Contact penalty.

- * All defensive players are eligible to cross the Line of Scrimmage once the ball has been handed off, tossed or passed laterally as well as on a fake handoff, toss or lateral pass to another offensive player.
- * On interceptions that occur & remain in the end zone the ball will belong to the intercepting team on its own 5 yard line. Should a player leave the end zone the ball will be marked at the spot where the ball carrier is flagged, however should the player return to the end zone & be flagged then the result would be a safety for the other team.
- * Any pass or fumble is incomplete / dead if the ball touches the ground while not firmly controlled by a player or if a player is touching / touches a boundary line receiving the ball.
- * When a handoff, toss or lateral pass is fumbled or is incomplete, the ball is spotted at the point of last possession. If this occurs in the end zone, then a safety will be called.
- * When a fumble or tipped, pass is caught by either an offensive or defensive teammate the ball is live & can be advanced.
- * The offensive team may make one forward pass during each down provided the pass is thrown from behind the Line of Scrimmage & is received by a different player beyond the Line of Scrimmage.
- * On a forward pass thrown by an offensive that is tipped / blocked by a defensive player & is caught by the same offensive player behind the Line of Scrimmage they can attempt another forward pass, however they cannot run with the ball across the Line of Scrimmage.
- * Push or Shovel passes thrown with one or two hands overhand, sidearm or underhand are allowed, but must be across the Line of Scrimmage.
- * Any player with only 1 flag (i.e. it falls off before play starts) is still eligible to receive the ball, however the play will be blown dead at the spot that they gain possession the ball.
- * If a ball carrier's flag or flags are moved out of position as the result of the defensive team's attempt to flag the ball carrier the play will continue until they are flagged.
- * When a second Pass Interference or Illegal Contact penalty is called on the defensive team during an Extra Point Try the point(s) will be awarded to the offensive team.
- * Only the Head Coaches from each team can address officials during games.
- * Coaches are not allowed on the field during injury timeouts to coach players.

A play is ruled dead when:

- * An official blows their whistle or points are scored.
- * When the ball touches the ground, an official or the goal post assembly.
- * When a ball carrier steps or touches out of bounds or any part of their body except their hands / feet touch the ground or they simulate placing their knee on the ground.
- * When one or more of the ball carrier's flags are pulled, when one or more of their flags falls off, when one or more of their flags is covered by their uniform jersey & when one or more of their cloth flags does not have 2 inches (three fingers) or more of white showing.
- * When a player receives the ball with only one or no flags on their hips.
- * When a Delay of Game, Delay of Pass, Diving, Flag Guarding, Illegal Running, Illegal Forward Pass, Interference or Jumping penalty occurs.
- * In the case of an inadvertent whistle by an official the team adversely affected may elect to replay the down or put the ball in play from the spot where it was declared dead. If the official cannot determine if a team is adversely affected the down is replayed. Note that any Live Ball foul(s) that occur before an inadvertent whistle will still be enforced.

Conduct of Players, Coaches and Spectators:

- * No player, coach or spectator shall contact an opponent or officials.
- * No substitute player, coach or spectator on the sideline may interfere in any way with the ball, player or officials while the ball is in play.
- * Offensive players are responsible to return the ball quickly to the officials after a play.
- * Players who have pulled an opponent's flags are responsible to return them to the player.
- * No player shall try to strip or take the ball away from a ball carrier.
- * The ball carrier is responsible to avoid physical contact with the defensive players (i.e. jumping through or splitting defensive players blocking their path).

- * Acts of flagrant contact such as holding, blocking, shoving, tackling, cheap shots or fighting, the use of abrasive, threatening, obscene language or gestures, engaging in activities that provoke ill will or are demeaning such as trash talking will not be tolerated & will be subject to warnings, penalties and / or ejections from the game by officials. Any player, coach or spectator that is ejected from a game will serve a mandatory 1 game / next game suspension. In addition, any instances or occurrences of these types of acts may be reported to the FNS Disciplinary Review committee for follow-up with the possibility of additional game or season suspensions.
- * It is expected that all players, coaches & spectators will adhere to good sportsmanship including positively cheering / complimenting all players with no harassment of players, teams, coaches, officials or spectators & keeping all comments clean and / or profanity free.

Penalties:

Legend: LOS = Line of Scrimmage; LOD = Loss of Down; AFD = Automatic First Down; SOC = Spot of Catch; SOF = Spot of Foul; ND = Next Down)

- * Equal & offsetting penalties by both teams will result in the down being replayed.
- * Officials may take any action they consider equitable including assessing penalties, disqualifying and / or ejecting players / coaches / spectators, awarding a score or suspending / forfeiting the game for any unfair tactics by players or teams that are not specifically covered by the rules.
- * A game cannot end on a defensive penalty unless it can be & is declined.
- * Penalties are assessed as Live Ball or Dead Ball penalties with Live Ball penalties being enforced before a play is considered completed.
- * All penalties are + or – 5 yards, are assessed from the LOS & the down is replayed unless otherwise noted.
- * Any penalties enforced cannot exceed more than ½ the distance to a goal line.
- * Offensive Flag Guarding, Jumping, Diving & Interference as well as defensive Pass Interference & Illegal Contact are now enforced from the Spot of Foul (SOF).

Major / General Penalties:

- * Major Foul / Unsportsmanlike Conduct – players, coaches, teams or spectators striking an opponent or an official with the deliberate intent to cause bodily harm as well as any acts of roughness or unfair play considered by officials to threaten the safety of participants will result in ejection from the game, a 15 yard penalty being assessed against their team & LOD or AFD.
- * Personal Foul – any act of roughness or unfair play by players, coaches, teams or spectators that is not considered by the officials to be a major foul is a personal foul and will result in a 15 yard penalty being assessed against their team as well as LOD or AFD.
- * Objectionable Conduct – players, coaches, teams or spectators using profane language or gestures, threats, demeaning or intimidating remarks & actions, persistent arguments, fake injuries, delay of game or targeting players to initiate contact will result in a 5 yard penalty. Any player, coach, team or spectator receiving a second Objectionable Conduct penalty during a game will be ejected from that game.
- * Illegal Substitution – any player substitutions by either team after the Center has touched ball in preparation for the snap to start play.
- * Game Interference – any substitute players, coaches or spectators interfering with ball, player or official while ball is in play.
- * Leaving Team Area – players or coaches leaving their designated team sideline area or crossing the middle of the field into the opponent's team area.

Offensive Penalties:

- * Delay of Game – ball is not snapped within 30 seconds, play whistled dead (+ND)
- * Delay of Pass – ball is not passed by Quarterback in 7 seconds, play whistled dead (+ND)
- * Offside – player(s) lined up across or crossing the LOS at the snap of the ball
- * Illegal Snap – Center lifting or moving ball to simulate a snap
- * Flag Guarding, Jumping or Diving – ball carrier uses any part of their body or ball to prevent flags from being pulled or advancing the ball, play is whistled dead at SOF (+ND)
- * Rusher Interference – impeding a rusher's direct path to Quarterback (+LOD)

- * Player Out of Bounds – player goes out of bounds by themselves, returns inbounds & then touches the ball inbounds
- * Interference – impeding, redirecting, obstruction, blocking with no contact, play whistled dead at SOF (+ND)
- * Illegal Contact – physical contact such as impeding, redirecting, obstruction, blocking, holding & tackling (+LOD)
- * Pass Interference – both contact & non-contact that interferes with a defensive player's catching a ball while it is in air, also includes screening, pushing off & pick plays (+LOD)
- * Illegal Forward Pass – a forward pass that is caught before a player crosses the LOS, a second forward pass during a play or a forward pass after the ball has crossed the LOS, play whistled dead (+LOD)
- * Illegal Running Play – Quarterback run with ball across LOS, a forward handoff or a run / fake run inside the 5 yard No Run Zone, play whistled dead (+ND)

Defensive Penalties:

- * Offside – player(s) lined up across or crossing the LOS at the snap of the ball
- * Disconcerting Signals – signals to distract or simulate offensive signals prior to snap
- * Illegal Rushing – players not lined up at least 12 inches away from rusher bean bag or rushing & crossing the LOS from inside the 7 yard rusher bean bag
- * Pass Interference – both contact & non-contact that interferes with an offensive player catching a ball while it is in air, also includes screening & pushing off, SOF (+AFD)
- * Illegal Contact – physical contact such as impeding, redirecting, obstruction, blocking, holding, & tackling as well as any upper body contact with an offensive player throwing the ball including the ball in their hand, SOF (+AFD)
- * Illegal Flag Pull – pulling a flag of a player before they have the ball, SOC (+AFD)

