

## United Sports Youth Flag Football League

### **START OF GAME AND BALL MOVEMENT:**

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. For k-1 – Teams will have 4-downs to get to midfield, then 4-downs to score if they make the first down at midfield.
4. For all other divisions, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> and older - The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
  - a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elect to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross field, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot of the turnover on downs.
  - b. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
  - c. Offensive Teams **MUST** declare 4th down intent or snap the ball prior to the expiration of the Play Clock.
5. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

### **GAME AND CLOCK:**

- ALL Divisions will play 7v7 on outdoor turf fields.
- If a team only has 6 players present, the opposing team **must** play 6v6. If a team has **ONLY** five players or fewer present, they can either play 5v6, OR elect to mix up the teams and play a scrimmage if they choose.
- There will be a 5-minute grace period for scheduled contests to allow for more players.
- If a team doesn't have 5 players by the end of the grace period, they may be required to forfeit and play a scrimmage. Forfeit victories will be ruled as 21-0.
  
- Games will be played with Two (2) Twenty (20) minute halves with running clock (brief half time)
- Each team has **2 time outs per game** of 30 seconds (time out resets play clock)
- **30 second play clock** (kept by the referee) – this includes PATs – ref will provide warnings early in the season, but will need to keep pace moving rather than spending too long in huddles
  - Clock will stop at one (1) minute left in the game if the game is within one score on incomplete pass, out of bounds, penalties, TDs and change of possession.
  - All time is kept by the ref on their personal timing device.
    - There is no Overtime in the regular season. Games may end in a TIE. Post-season OT rules will be announced prior to post-season tournament play.

### **COACHES:**

- Only league appointed coaches should be on the sideline with players or interacting with officials.

- ALL league appointed coaches must be aware of the league guidelines in terms or code of conduct, substitution policy, etc. If coaches cannot work within league guidelines; they may be removed from coaching position.
- **K-1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade** – ONE coach is allowed to be on the field to help on either Offense or Defense, but must be sure to stay out of the play and let players play.
  - If a coach gets in the way, they will be warned ONCE, any subsequent interference with play will require the defensive coach to be removed from the field for the rest of the game.
  - Coaches are not to call out opponents plays or assist players in that capacity. Will be warned once, then assessed unsportsmanlike penalty for this behavior.
- **4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade and older** - defensive coaches will remain on sidelines once a possession begins in order to be out of the way and provide more opportunity for the players to take leadership roles. One (1) offensive coach may stay on the field to huddle team and call plays.

**SIDELINES:** A coach/parent should be on the sideline, if possible, to help with substitutions

- Anyone on the sideline helping coach must have PATCH Clearance on file.

#### **BALL MOVEMENT:**

- Offense begins on 5-yard line as marked by official.
- Center starts offense by snapping the ball to QB (DOES NOT need to be through legs, but ball must be on the ground when starting)
- The offensive team must have a minimum of THREE players on the line of scrimmage at the snap. The players do not have to be “lineman” ie. Guard, center, guard - they just must be simply on the LOS anywhere along the line.
- Only one player may be in motion prior to or during the snap – the player may only go laterally
  - Offensive Team has up to **4** plays to cross mid field for first down and then **3** plays to score
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Down before midfield – teams may elect to “PUNT” (move the ball down to opposing 5-yard line and switch to defense OR go for it, but if a first down is not reached – defensive team takes over on offense at the spot of the previous play.
  - **(\* K-1 Division always has 4 downs – before and after midfield, ball always returns to opposite 5-yard line on Turnover on downs \*)**
- If the ball is intercepted, offense is spotted at end of return and offense is started.
- **NO FUMBLE RECOVERIES** Ball is dead on the spot of the contact with the turf – you may lose yards, but not gain yards on fumbled or pitched balls (\*\*If a snap is fumbled, it may be picked up ONLY by the player who it is snapped to and resume play\*\*)
  - Play is dead when ball carrier’s flag is pulled or knees/elbow/etc contact the ground.

#### **DEFENSE AND RUSHING THE QB:**

- **There will be no live rush in the k-1 Division unless there is a handoff**
- **In 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> – we will change to an amended blitzing rule to begin to build the understanding of blitzing. Teams may blitz “ONCE per set of downs” in 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> division.**

- o This means ONCE on the downs before mid-field and first down line, and ONCE if a first down is successfully made.
- o In ALL other divisions, defenses may send ONE defensive blitz/rusher on any play.
- o The blitzer MUST rush from a spot 7-yards beyond the LOS – Ref will mark the spot
  - o Blitzer should identify himself to official pre-snap so he can ensure proper distance for rush
- o If blitzed, once the blitzing player crosses the LOS, the QB is now an eligible runner and can elect to run if he/she chooses.
- Defense is NOT required to send a rusher at any time. If the defense does not RUSH, the QB has 7-seconds to throw. A blitzing player crossing the line OR a handoff would negate this 7-second count as the defense may rush.
  - **Referee will count the seconds out loud.**

#### **NO-RUN/MUST-PASS ZONE:**

- The area within 5-yards of midfield (1<sup>st</sup> down) and the goal-line are MUST-PASS AREAS. **TEAMS MAY NOT RUN OR EVEN HAND OFF IN THIS AREA.**
- In these areas, offense must have QB who receives the snap pass the football. NO RB Passes or reverse passes allowed in a must-pass area.
- The defense may not send a blitz in this area either – sending a blitzer would make the QB eligible to run, but there is no rushing allowed in a must-pass zone.
  - This rule is designed for player safety.

#### **RUNNING/RECEIVING:**

- Blocking is not allowed in any way; players may set a stationary basketball style screen.
- Offensive players may not intentionally run in the way of the defensive player. Only non-moving set screens are allowed.
  - Setting intentionally rough, blind screens is grounds for an unsportsmanlike penalty at the referee's discretion
- A completed pass is when a player comes down with the ball in bounds with one (1) foot touching in bounds. (College Rules).
- Laterals and pitches are allowed (**must not be forward**)
- Everyone is an eligible receiver.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Ball carriers may not jump through a flag pull **while carrying with the ball**—will be immediately blown dead if ref rules a jumping action to avoid a flag pull took place
 

**NO DIVING, NO JUMPING, NO HURDLING while carrying the football. Play will be blown dead at spot of a jump. Will be treated the same as a flag guard.**

**NO FLAG GAURDING-** any action that impedes the defense to pull a flag is prohibited. i.e. Running with arms in way of flags/blocking/swiping/ at defenders' hands and stiff arming.

#### **DEFENSE:**

- Defenses will start off the line with a 3-yard buffer off the line of scrimmage until the ball is snapped, the referee will do his best to enforce this, but coaches please help with this as well. It

will help to keep the cluster off the line of scrimmage and players stepping into the backfield before the ball is snapped or handed off.

- Defense may cross the line of scrimmage on a hand off/pitch but **must wait until the ball changes possession.**
- **Teams may play any defensive scheme they would like, but must maintain a 3-yard buffer off of LOS.**

#### **FLAG PULLING AND SPOT OF THE BALL:**

- Player is “down” when **one** flag is pulled.
  - **Spot of the ball is player’s entire body (Hips, flags, body) – reaching the ball over to a spot should not be coached as the ball is NOT the spot.**
- After pulling a flag, defender should raise the flag above his head to help referee see the spot.
- Defender should drop flag on the spot or hand flag back to ball carrier after pull.
- **If flag falls out at any time, or player starts play without a flag, player is still eligible of possession of ball, but will be down with one hand touch.**
- A defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of the runner when attempting to remove the flag.
  - Both the ball carrier and flag puller must make efforts to avoid direct body contact or impeding forward progress.
    - Obstruction of forward progress (defense) and charging (offense) can both be called at ref’s discretion.
- **SCORING:**
  - 6 points for a touchdown
  - 2 points and possession of the ball for safety
  - 1 point for conversion after touchdown, ball is spotted on 4-yard line
    - The ball must be passed- inside the “no run zone”
    - Interceptions MAY be returned for 1 point
    - Defense may not rush
  - 2-point conversion after touchdown, ball is spotted on the 7-yard line
    - Team may run or pass, interceptions MAY be returned for 2 points
    - Defense may rush

#### **SPORTSMANSHIP RULES:**

- If a team takes a 21-point lead the following rules go into place:
  - All scoring will be recorded on the referee’s card, but wins will only be recorded with a margin of 21 points in order to discourage teams from intentionally running up the score.
  - If a game is lopsided, coaches need to be cognizant to spread the ball.
  - There will be no blitzing by the team who is ahead by 21+ points for the remainder of the time they have that lead.

#### **PENALTIES:**

- Offside - 5 yards or half the distance replay down
- Defensive Holding/Obstruction of Forward progress on a ball carrier: 5 yards from spot of the foul or half the distance, first down
  - If the defensive player holds, pushes out of bounds, or obstructs forward progress and is the last defender between offensive player and the end zone, the play may be ruled a Touchdown at the ref's discretion
- Charging – offensive player – 5 yards from original spot, loss of down
  - Referee's judgment call - Incidental contact will not be called, only intentional grabbing, rough play or lack of care to avoid contact to be called
- Defensive Intentional Stripping – 10 yards, first down
- Delay of game - 5 yards or half the distance
- Illegal Blocks – extending arms to block or setting a moving screen – blown dead at the spot of the foul, 5-yard penalty, loss of down
- Illegal blitz – offense may take result of the play or 5-yard penalty plus first down
- Offset penalties - replay down
- Illegal forward pass – over the LOS, 5 yards and loss of down
- Illegal motion (more than one person moving or false start) – 5 yards and replay the down (will be lenient with K-1<sup>st</sup>)
- Flag guarding – any action the player takes to guard his/her flag, arm in the way, stiff arm, swiping hand, etc.
  - Offense: 5 yards from spot of the foul and the play will be whistled dead on the spot.
  - Defense after interception: 5 yards from spot of foul begin offense
- Offensive pass interference- 10 yards from original spot, loss of down
- Defensive Pass interference – 10 yards from original spot, automatic first down
- Illegal contact with Passer – 10 yards from original spot, automatic first down
- Unnecessary roughness/Unsportsmanlike Conduct/Personal Foul –
  - Defense: 15 yards automatic first down
  - Offense: 15 yards loss of down
- **Acts of deliberate tackling, cheap shots, or an unsportsmanlike act will not be tolerated. Player may be ejected from the game and will result in unsportsmanlike penalty at the sole discretion of the referee.**
  - Depending on severity, player may be subject to suspension or expulsion from the league without refund. Player safety is of the utmost importance.
- Any player instigating or encouraging a fight, taunting or throwing a punch/kick will be immediately removed from the game and be subject to further disciplinary action at the sole discretion of the league director.
- **Trash talking is illegal and may result in unsportsmanlike penalty. Any player, coach or spectator verbally abusing a player, spectator, referee, or employee of United Sports will be immediately removed from the game and escorted from the facility.**
- Personal fouls/unsportsmanlike penalties will result in an automatic first down and 15 yards from the end of the play. Player assessed the foul may be subject to removal from the game for

the remainder of the half, or longer at the referee's sole discretion based on severity of incident. If a player is ejected from a game, a suspension will likely follow – same applies for coaches.