



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Youth Sports



YMCA OF GREATER SAN ANTONIO

YMCA Mission: To put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

YMCA Pledge:

Players Pledge:

Win or Lose,
I pledge before God
To play the game as well as I know how,
To obey the rules,
And to be a good sport at all times,
And to Improve myself,
In Spirit, mind, and body.

Parents Pledge:

I pledge before God,
To always support my team,
With good sportsmanship
And sound judgment,
And to develop my child's self-respect,
And support their participation in the program,
The child first, the sport second.

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

TEAM DUTIES

1. Both teams are responsible for cleaning up their bench immediately after the game.
2. During the game, there will be a maximum of three (3) coaches on the sideline. One (1) head coach and two (2) assistants.
 - a. Only ONE coach is allowed on the field for offense or defense. Offensive coaches may be in the huddle with their team while the defensive coach must be behind all defensive players. Coaches must not interfere with an active play.
 - b. Coaches on the sideline must remain on their side of the field and may not cross the 50 yard line to the other team's sideline.
3. All spectators must be seated on the sideline opposite the team and cannot stand or sit in the end zone. Spectators and coaches are not allowed on the field, unless requested to attend to an injured player. Only cleared coaches and registered participants are allowed on the bench.

SPORTSMANSHIP

1. The YMCA does not keep official game scores or records. However, the score is documented during the game to promote a learning environment.
2. Unsportsmanlike conduct of the players or coaches is not tolerated. If the behavior persists, the individual will be asked to leave the facility.
3. **Any player, coach or spectator ejected/disqualified during a game is subject to suspension for at least (1) game and/or may be placed on season probation. If ejected/disqualified again during a season, the individual will be subject to permanent removal from the YMCA program. The YMCA sports cabinet will meet to review suspensions and removal. Cases will also be reviewed by the sports cabinet for reinstatement.**
4. If the atmosphere of the game feels unsafe or the YMCAs Values are not being adhered to, the referee or YMCA staff member can end the game.
5. If a team has less than the number of required players, the game can be played with less players on each team (i.e. 5v5). Alternatively, the opposing team can "share" player(s) in order to provide competition and play the game. We make every effort to play each scheduled game.
6. Coaches are expected to adhere to YMCA Values and are responsible for team actions. This includes parents and players.
7. The YMCA Players and Parents Pledge is required prior to the start of each game. A YMCA Staff will lead the pledge, however in the event a staff member is unavailable, the coach, a parent or player can administer the pledge.

YMCA YOUTH SPORTS KEY PHILOSOPHIES

- Everyone must play at least half the game.
- Coaches are volunteers. They are not paid.
- Our focus is on fun and skill development.
- Sportsmanship above all.
- We promote a family atmosphere.

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

PLAYER SAFETY

- To protect the safety of all players in the program, any participant wearing a cast will prohibit them from participating in YMCA games or practices. Exceptions can be made with approval from the Sports Director and documented approval from a physician.
- Soft casts will be permitted if approved by officials.
- All types of jewelry (earrings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.) must be removed before the game.
- Adaptive aids are approved on a case by case basis.

UNIFORM

- Each player must wear their YMCA issued jersey. The jersey must be tucked into the player's shorts or pants.
- The player's shorts or pants cannot have pockets. Hats may not be worn. Additionally, only rubber-soled/cleated shoes may be worn.
- Metal cleats and Bulldog cleats (cleat on the front of the shoe) are not permitted.

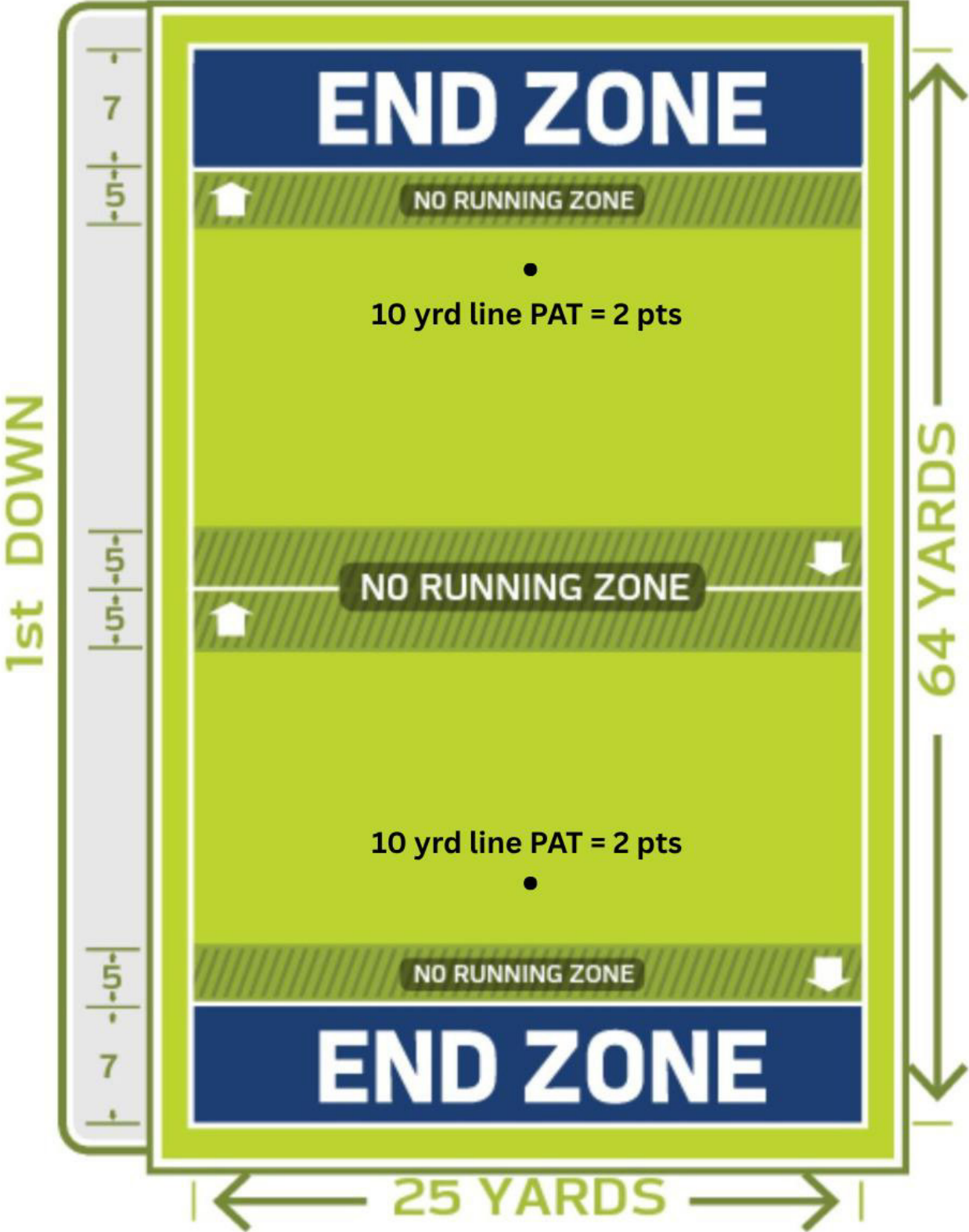
EQUIPMENT

- The YMCA furnished flags must be used. Flags may not be wrapped, tied, or tucked around the flag belt and must be in clear view of the defending player. Excess belt material must be wrapped around the belt or tucked in the waistband so as not to have the appearance of a flag.
- Football Size
 - 8 and under = Pee Wee
 - 9 – 10 years = Junior
 - 11 – 12 years = Junior
- Only knee pads may be worn.
- **Mouthpieces are required.** Players may not play without a mouthpiece; checked pregame
- Braces must be inspected and approved by the game official prior to the game.
- Players must wear shorts/sweats without pockets (teams may want to bring a roll of duct tape in case players arrive at the game wearing shorts/sweats with pockets)
- Player uniforms (shirts) are required to be tucked into their shorts/sweats at all times during the game.

GAME FIELD

- Field Dimensions and Layout: 25 yards wide × 64 yards long with 7-yard endzones.
- Field layout will have a midfield line to gain for a first down. 'No Run Zones' are located 5 yards prior to midfield and 5 yards prior to each endzone.
- Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- 'No Run' Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting run plays. While in the 'No Run' Zones, teams cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage. All plays must result in a forward pass across the Line of Scrimmage.
- The referee will spot the ball in the middle of the field prior to the 'Ready to Play' whistle. Play clock (25 seconds) begins on the whistle

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GAME SETUP

- Maximum of three (3) coaches. One (1) head coach and two (2) assistant coaches.
- Only one coach is allowed on the field for both offense and defense.
- All age groups will play 7-vs-7. However, if a team is unable to field 7 players for a certain game, teams may play with a minimum of 5-vs-5. Additionally, teams may “loan/share” player(s), if necessary, to play the game.
- 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.
- The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense, defense, or defer.
- Teams will automatically switch sides of the field and the team that started the game with possession will begin the 2nd half on defense.
- 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 downs (3)** to score a touchdown.
 - a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield after 3rd down and elect to “punt” on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposing team will start a new possession from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross midfield, the opposing team will start a new possession from the spot where 4th down ended.
 - b. Any time there is a ‘PUNT or PLAY’ decision on 4th down, the referee WILL ask the offense’s Head Coach to declare ‘Punt or Play’. The coach MUST make an immediate decision or risk a delay of game penalty.
 - c. Teams may use their timeouts to change the declaration of “Play” at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
 - d. After crossing midfield, if the offense fails to score on **3rd down**, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts at its 5-yard line.

COACHES

- Maximum of three (3) coaches. One (1) head coach and two (2) assistant coaches.
- Only **one coach** is allowed on the field for both offense and defense.
- Players and coaches are the only individuals permitted on the team sideline during the game.
- Players and coaches are to be on one side of the field and spectators and parents on the other side. There will be no coaching from the spectator area.
- Coaches are responsible for their fans’ conduct and behavior plus any other associated team members in their designated team area.

GENERAL RULES

- Each YMCA Flag Football game will consist of four 10-minute quarters. There will be a:
 - One (1) minute break after the first quarter and third quarters.
 - Three (3) min halftime.
- All players are eligible receivers.
- Three (3) one-minute timeouts are allowed per game. Unused timeouts carry over to the 2nd half.

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1. SCORING

- Touchdown is legal when a player's hips with flags attached and possession of the ball cross the goal line; touchdown = 6 points
- PAT (point after touchdown) 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line). A 1-point extra point is pass only; 2-point extra point can be a run or pass.
- Interceptions returned for scores are worth 6 points. PAT follows.
- Safety: 2 points • A safety occurs when the ballcarrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
- A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
- Game clock and play clock will stop after PATs and for injuries and will restart when the referees have reset the field and are in place to officiate the game for the following possession/play.

2. AVOIDING CONTACT

- It is the defensive player's responsibility to avoid contact with the offensive player on routes.
- The defender may not intentionally push or shove a ball carrier out of bounds.
- The offensive player must run around the defender(s), not over or through the defender(s).
- The offensive player may not lower their shoulder/head or stiff arm a defender when running with the football.

3. NO FLAG STRIPPING

- The defender may not intentionally pull the flag from an offensive player who does not possess the football.

4. NO STRIPPING THE BALL

- Players may not intentionally strip the ball from the ball carrier's arm.

5. NO TRIPPING

- Tripping or using the leg to stop an offensive player is illegal.

6. FLAG PULLING

- A ball carrier will be down where their flag is pulled.
- 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 a play while that player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
- If a player who has one or no flags on their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.

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- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flag(s) off 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, ball, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

7. BLOCKING IS NOT ALLOWED.

- Offensive players may not run beside/shield/screen a teammate who is carrying the ball.
- Screen/shield blocking is illegally obstructing an opponent without contacting him/her with any part of the screen blocker's body. (Discretion of the referee)

8. THERE IS NO PUNTING.

9. NO ROUGHING THE PASSER.

- When rushing the passer, defensive players will go for the flag ONLY.
- Roughing the passer is when a defensive player tries to block a pass and contacts the passer's arm OR runs into the passer in any way; even after the pass is released.
- This rule applies whether the ball is blocked or not by the defender.

10. LIVE BALL/DEAD BALL REGULATIONS

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. The game officials may give teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
- A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds, as long as the first foot or a body part other than the hand, contacts the ground in the field, while maintaining possession.
- Substitutions may be made during any dead ball period.
- The defense may not simulate the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. Other unfair acts would be; not returning five (5) eligible players to the field of play after halftime, a team or officials' time out prior to the 'Ready to Play' signal by the referee. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on the Head Coach.
- Any official can whistle the play dead. Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a snap, backwards pitch or lateral, the ball will be placed where the ball hit the ground.
 - b. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier's knee, shin, leg, forearm or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier's flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of 1 or 0 flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle

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- j. Ball-carrier leaves their feet to dive, jump or hurdle a player. (Exception: A PLAYER CAN DIVE TO CATCH A PASS OR PULL A FLAG)

DEFENSE – RUSHING THE PASSER

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend the line of scrimmage/secondary. Intro to Flag Football, (5/6 age division), defenders may not rush the passer. Any defensive pass rusher will not run over an offensive player. They must go around the offensive player.
- Once the ball is handed off, pitched, or lateraled backwards behind the line of scrimmage, all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage to defend and pull the flag. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage or secondary.
- A special marker, (cone or the game official), will designate a rush line 7 yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players are responsible to verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
- A legal rush at the ball snap is:
 - Any rush from the cone 7-yards from the 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 must return to the rush line, reset, to then legally rush the quarterback beyond the line of scrimmage.
- A penalty may be called if:
 - The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff, pitch, lateral or pass – Illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and replay down).
 - Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Encroachment (5-yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
 - Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed, pitched, lateraled or handed off – Illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
 - If the offense draws the identified rusher(s) across the 7-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, the rusher(s) CANNOT legally rush. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to a handoff, pitch, lateral or forward pass. Teams are never required to rush the quarterback with the 7 second clock in effect
- Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty
- The offense cannot impede the rusher's 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 avoid contact.
- A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- A 2-point Safety is awarded if a flag pull takes place in the offensive team's end zone.
- All defensive linemen will be in a two-point stance.

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OFFENSE – RUNNING

- The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball across the Line of Scrimmage (LOS). The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap under center directly or in shotgun formation.
- Direct handoffs, pitches, and laterals are permitted behind the line of scrimmage only. If this takes place, after the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage, the play is to be blown dead by the official. The ball shall be placed at the spot.
 - “Center sneak” play is NOT allowed. The QB may NOT handoff, pitch or lateral the ball first to the center.
 - Any player who receives a handoff, backward pass, pitch or lateral can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, or a backward pass, pitch or lateral has occurred; the 7-second passing clock is eliminated, and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Definition of a “Legal Handoff” – Total loss of possession directly from 1 offensive play to another.
- Teams are not allowed to run in the ‘NO RUN ZONES’. (Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
- Runners are not permitted to jump, leap, or hurdle, in the officials’ judgement, while advancing the ball. The play is to be blown dead, and the ball spotted where the jump, leap, or hurdle occurred. Runners are permitted to spin, jump cut, and QB jump passing or if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player.
- No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time either beyond or behind the line of scrimmage. Offensive players in close proximity to the ball carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running beside the ball carrier.
- 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.
- Once the ball is advanced beyond the LOS, the current ball carrier is the only player allowed to have possession of the ball until the play is dead.

OFFENSE – PASSING

- Only 1 forward pass, thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, is permitted each offensive play. The ball must be released prior to crossing the line of scrimmage. There can be unlimited backward passes behind the line of scrimmage.
 - There is no penalty for intentional grounding. The quarterback may throw the ball anywhere across the line of scrimmage to avoid a sack.
 - All forward passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender. All forward passes must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed and must be a forward pass, from behind the line of scrimmage
- The quarterback has a 7 second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds, the play is dead, the down counts and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, pitched or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage, the 7 second rule is no longer in effect.

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- If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7 second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS) and it will be the next down. No safety is called.
- If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.

OFFENSE – RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off, pitched or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage).
- A Legal catch: player must have at least one foot or other body part inbounds, contacting the ground first with possession before out of bounds.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during PAT conversions.

OFFENSE – FORMATIONS

- Offenses must have a minimum of four (4) players on the line of scrimmage (this includes the Center). The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
- Movement simulating the snap, by a player who is set, is considered a false start.
- The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion. The center snap may be between his/her legs, on the side of ball, or in front of the ball. The center may turn and hand the ball to QB, No offsides is called if center is to side or in front of ball and stepping over the Line of Scrimmage.
- Only one player is allowed in motion when the ball is snapped. All motion must be parallel or backwards to the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
- Players may shift positions on offense at any time, all players must still reset prior to the snap.
- There will be NO swinging gate formations and no QB sneaks.
- All players on offense will be in a two-point stance.
- The offensive team has 25 seconds to snap the ball into play AFTER the referee marks the ball ready for play. The referee will give a 10 and 5-second play clock count.
- The quarterback (or the player who takes a direct snap from center) cannot run the ball after receiving ball directly from the center.
- If the defense does not send a rusher, the QB will have 7 seconds to pass/handoff ball.
- Offensive players going out for a pass may not impede defensive pass rusher(s)

PENALTIES

- The game officials will administer all penalties.
- Two (2) unsportsmanlike penalties on any player or coach in a game result in disqualification and subject to future game(s) suspension.
- The officials will determine incidental contact that may result from the normal run of a play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
- Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations.

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- Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- Spot fouls administered in the end zone: Defensive (Ball on one-yard line, first down)

Defensive Spot Fouls	
Foul	Penalty
Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding/Illegal Contact	+5 yards and replay down
Stripping	+5 yards and replay down

Offensive Spot Fouls	
Foul	Penalty
Screening or blocking	-5 yards and replay down
Charging	-5 yards and replay down
Flag Guarding	-5 yards from spot of flag guard
Holding/Illegal Contact	+5 yards and replay down

Defensive Penalties	
Foul	Penalty
Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down (player subject to disqualification – referee discretion)
Defensive pass interference	+10 yard and automatic first down
Offside/Illegal Substitution	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and replay down
Illegal Rush (starting rush from inside 7-yard line)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and replay down
Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)	+10 yards from line of scrimmage
Roughing the passer	+10 Yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

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Offensive Penalties	
Foul	Penalty
Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down (player subject to disqualification – referee discretion)
Offensive pass interference	-10 yards from line of scrimmage and replay down
Offside/Illegal Substitution	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and replay down
Illegal forward pass (pass thrown beyond line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and replay down
Illegal motion	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and replay down
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and replay down
Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and replay down
Taunting	-10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

INTRO TO FLAG FOOTBALL

- Above YMCA Flag Football Rules apply with the following adjustments:
- Games are 5 vs 5 players, 4 x 6-min qtrs, field is 30-yards, **two coaches** allow on the field for each team but must position themselves behind all players on the field. With the exception of the quarterback (coach)
- On offense the coach is the quarterback
- No center required to hike ball to the quarterback(coach); coach puts ball in play him/herself
- Quarterback may not run with the ball or go beyond the line of scrimmage to gain yardage or score touchdowns (quarterback must hand-off the ball or pass the ball)
- No rushing the quarterback (coach) on defense (i.e. no blitz)
- Defense must remain on their side of line of scrimmage until quarterback hands-off ball to player
- Minimum 3 players on the line of scrimmage on offense
- No Point after Touchdown (PAT) after offense scores a touchdown

REFEREES

- The official shall be the sole judge on the field of play. The official's decision is final.
- The official can ask coaches, parents, players, and spectators to leave the field of play or the facilities to maintain a pleasant atmosphere, and control of the game.
- If a coach, player, or spectator is disqualified/ejected from a game, that person(s)/situation will be subject to review by the Competition Director and/or Sports Director with a potential one (1) game suspension. Should another incident occur within the same season and the same person(s), that coach, spectator, or player may be disqualified/ejected from the league permanently.
- The official may stop, suspend, or terminate the game because of the elements of interference.
- There will be no disrespectful words, gestures, or actions toward an official during the game from a player, coach, or spectator.

SUBSTITUTIONS

- A primary goal of the YMCA is to provide all children with equal playing time. All players must play a minimum of 50% of the game. If a player is sick or injured, the referee must be notified before the start of the game.
- If a player ends up becoming ill or injured during a game, he or she can be substituted out.