Youth Flag Football Rules

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All playing rules listed below will govern league play. In the event a situation is not listed below, it will default to the 2017-2018 National Intramural Recreational Sport Association (NIRSA) Flag Football Rules Book.

I. Playing Rules

All playing rules listed below will govern league play. In the event a situation is not listed below, it will default to the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) Flag Football Rules.

A. GENERAL RULES

The game length will vary based upon the age group involved. The 5-6 year olds and 7-8 year olds will play 18 minute halves and the 9-12 year olds will play 22 minute halves.

a. During the entirety of the first half and until the final 2 minutes of the 2nd half, the clock will run continuously and will stop only for a team or official time out.
b. Stop timing will be used during the **last 2 minutes of the game**, at which the time clock will stop on all whistles other than de-flagging. Teams will be notified at the beginning of the 2-minute period.
c. After a stopped clock, time will begin at the snap of the ball (unless in the final 2 minutes of the game, as dependent on the previous play).
d. When a team is awarded a new series in the final 2 minutes of the game, the clock starts on the snap.
e. The clock will run during a P.A.T. attempt (except in the final 2 minutes of the game).
f. With less than 2 minutes remaining in **the game** the offended team of any foul will have the option to start the game clock on the snap when it would have normally started on the ready-for-play whistle.
g. Half time will be 5 minutes in duration.
h. The Line Judge is the Official Timer.

B. Uniform:

a. Each member of the team must have a shirt of the same color and must have a screen-printed or ironed-on number on the back of the shirt. Teams are not allowed to have duplicate jersey numbers (1 and 01, 3 and 03, 8 and 08, etc. are NOT the same number).
b. Shorts/Pants must be a different color than the flags with **NO BELT LOOPS OR POCKETS**.
c. No protective equipment may be worn: i.e. helmets, shoulder pads or hip pads. All protective medical materials (tape, pads, etc.) must be approved by the Game Official.
d. Molded cleats or tennis shoes are the only allowable footwear. **NO METAL, SCREW IN OR METAL TIPPED CLEATS ARE ALLOWED.** Shoes must be worn at all times.
e. Shirts must be long enough so they remain tucked in the pants/shorts during the entire down.
f. The use of headgear (including hats), **JEWELRY**, body pads or any unyielding or dangerous equipment is **PROHIBITED**. Headwear containing any exposed knots, such as bandannas, is illegal. **NOTE:** Should there be question regarding the legality of any equipment, the referee will make the final ruling.
g. Only flags supplied by GRPD may be used.
h. The regular, intermediate, junior, youth, or pee wee size football shall be used for youth games.
i. Mouth guards must be worn during all games.
j. No splints or casts (hard or soft) will be allowed on arms, head, or fingers.
k. All players must wear shirt tails in and pants pulled up and there will be no baggy or loose pants allowed.
l. Alterations to shirts (ex: cut off sleeves) will not be allowed.

C. Each team is allowed one (1) 60-second time out per half.

D. Once the ball is marked ready for play, a team has 30 seconds within which to snap the ball.

E. A team may defer its toss option to the second half.

F. Once a team captain/coach declares a punt or makes a choice of going for a 1, 2 or 3 point conversion after scoring a touchdown, he/she may change the decision only if a charged time out is granted to either team.

G. Only seven players per team are allowed on the field at a time. A minimum of four players is necessary to begin play. The game may be continued with fewer than 4 players if the team has a chance to win. Every substitute must enter the game when there is a change of possession.

H. The offense is only required to have the snapper on the line of scrimmage.

I. All plays must originate with a snap from center. The snap may be first touched by an A player at any distance behind A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange). Direct snaps are legal.

J. Only one offensive player may be in motion when the ball is snapped. This motion must begin more than one second before the ball is snapped, and must be parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage. A player may go in motion from the line but IS NOT considered being a player on the line.

K. After the ball is ready-for-play, each player of the offensive team must momentarily be within 15 yards of the ball prior to the snap before moving closer to the sideline.

L. No defensive player may be closer than 2 yards to the line of scrimmage during all scrimmage downs. Defensive players may not break the neutral zone until the ball is snapped.

M. Offensive players are responsible for helping retrieve the ball after a down has ended.

N. All players not in the game, and spectators, must remain between the 15-yard line markers and two yards off the sideline.

O. Alcoholic beverages will not be allowed at anytime on City property or properties used by the City of Greenville. If in the opinion of the official, League Director, or any GRPD Staff, a manager/coach has been drinking and is not removed from the game and playing area after the manager of the team involved has been notified, the game will be forfeited.

P. Any person using profane or vulgar language will be removed from the field. If a player is removed from the field for unsportsmanlike conduct, he/she shall be automatically suspended for the next game played.

Q. Coaches are not allowed to smoke in the playing area.

R. **<u>SCORING</u>**

a. Point values will be as follows:

- Touchdown:	6 points
- Safety:	2 points
- PAT from 3 yard line:	1 point
- PAT from 5 yard line:	2 points
- PAT from 10 yard line:	3 points

b. **Touchdown verification**: The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can de-flag the player. If the player is not de-flagged with one pull, and the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is disallowed, the player is disqualified and it is a foul.

c. **Tie-Breaker:** Should a game end with a tie score the result will be final in all 5-6 year old games and all 7-8 and 9-12 regular season games. **For playoffs** in the 7-8 and 9-12 age groups, the following system shall be used:

i. Coin toss with the following options.
   1. Offense or defense
   2. Goal - Both teams will use the same goal on offense.

ii. Each team is allowed a series of 4 downs in which to score from the 10-yard line. A series is ended by:
   1. Scoring a touchdown, PAT is attempted; if needed.
   2. Interception – The ball is dead immediately if the defensive team intercepts the ball. They will begin their 4 down series, if available.

iii. If the score still remains tied, each team will have another 4 down series with the opposite team having 1st option of offense or defense. This type of play will continue until a winner is determined.

d. **Mercy Rule:** If a team is 19 or more points ahead when the Referee announces the 2-minute warning for the second half the game shall continue with a running clock.

S. FIRST DOWNS

a. A first down is awarded to a team when they advance the ball across the next 15-yard marker. Four downs will be allowed to complete the task.

b. Only one first down per series of possession can be obtained at each 15-yard marker.

T. CARRYING

a. A runner shall not flag guard by using his/her hands, arms, or the ball to cause contact between the runner and an opponent that denies the opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag. Spinning or jumping to avoid being de-flagged is **legal**. Actions such as slapping with the hand or stiff-arming are examples of flag guarding.

b. A ball carrier may not hurdle a player to avoid de-flagging.

c. If a player **inadvertently** loses their flags or it is pulled by the opposition before gaining possession of the ball, the play will continue and the player must be downed by **a one hand touch**, between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm.

d. A player will be ruled "down" when any part of their body other than the hand or foot touches the ground.

e. The defender may not hold or tackle the runner while de-flagging the ball carrier.

f. A fumbled or muffed ball is dead when it strikes the ground.

g. **Inadvertent Whistle**: When an inadvertent whistle occurs while a ball is in player possession, the offensive team will have the option of taking the play with the ball spotted at its location when the whistle blew or replay the down. If the ball is loose following a backward pass or fumble, the team will have the option of taking the ball at the spot where possession was lost or replay the down. During a legal forward pass or any kick, if an inadvertent whistle occurs, the ball is returned to the previous spot and the down replayed.

h. It is illegal to attempt to steal a ball in a player's possession.

i. In pulling a flag and/or touching a ball carrier, a defender's feet MAY leave the ground. Diving **IS** legal by defensive or offensive players however; the diving player is still responsible for any contact which they initiate.

U. PASSING

a. A forward pass may be thrown from any point behind the line of scrimmage.

b. All incomplete backward passes shall be marked down at the point of ground contact.

c. Only 1 forward pass may be attempted from behind the line of scrimmage on a given play.

d. A forward pass is **illegal** if:
   a. It is thrown from beyond the line of scrimmage.
   b. It is intentional grounding.
   c. It is thrown after a change of possession.
   d. The passer catches his/her untouched forward/backward pass.
   e. It is the second forward pass during a play.

e. A player must have complete possession of the ball and first land inbounds to be a legal reception.

f. A pass intercepted in the end zone may be advanced.

g. If the passer is de-flagged prior to releasing the ball, the ball is dead at that spot and the down has ended.

h. If an offensive player goes out-of-bounds on their own volition and returns inbounds, it is an illegal participation foul.

i. Contact is required for pass interference to be called (non-contact face guarding is no longer a foul).

j. **Roughing the Passer**: Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as he/she is considered out of the play after the pass.

V. BLOCKING & RUSHING

a. No part of the body except the feet shall be in contact with the ground and the feet must remain on the ground for the duration of the block.

b. Blocking will be by **SCREENING ONLY**, meaning, a blocker must hinder a defender's movement through positioning rather than body contact.

c. During a block, the body must remain upright with elbows and hands touching the body at the side or behind the back.

d. While incidental contact may occur, blocking/rushing penalties will be called against the player who initiates contact.

e. The defense may not use hands, arms, or legs as a wedge to gain an advantage over a blocker.

W. KICKING

a. There will be no kickoffs or free kicks. Possessions beginning a new half will begin on the 10-yard line.

b. Following any touchdown, the ball shall be placed on the 10-yard line with possession being given to the opponent of the scoring team.

c. Following a safety, the ball shall be placed on the 10-yard line with possession being given to the team who just scored the safety.

d. On each fourth down, the offense must announce prior to the ready for play whistle whether they will kick. Once the decision is made, it cannot be changed except if a Team A or Team B charged time-out is called, if a period ends, if a foul occurs, or an inadvertent whistle is blown any time prior to or during this down after the Team A captain's decision that results in the kicking team having the right to repeat the down again. In these situations, the Referee must ask the Team A captain whether he/she wants to punt or play and communicate this decision to the Team B captain. In the 5-6 year old and 7-8 year old divisions there are no punts. If a team wishes to punt the Referee will mark off 20 yards in advance of the scrimmage line and it will be 1st down for the opponent. If a kick is to be made as in the 9-12 year old division, the following procedures must be followed:

1. The offense (no requirements for the defense) is only required to have the snapper on the line of scrimmage.
2. The kicker must receive the snap at least two yards behind the center as for any other scrimmage play and the kick must be immediate.
3. Any type of illegal delaying tactic will result in time being added back on the clock.
4. Players of the kicking or receiving team may not advance beyond their respective scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked. The receiving team may attempt to block the kick after it crosses their scrimmage line.
5. Once the ball is punted, any receiving player may block the kick. If a player on the kicking team catches the kick behind the receiving team's line of scrimmage they may advance.
6. If the ball hits a receiving team player beyond R's scrimmage line and is then caught by a kicking team player beyond R's scrimmage line, the ball is dead, belongs to K, and a new series begins for K.

e. The kicking team may catch, touch, muff or bat a punt in flight beyond their line of scrimmage if no receiving team player is in position to catch the ball.

f. A punt which breaks the plane of the goal line is a touchback. A punt may not be run out of the end zone.

II. Penalties

a. The offended team may have its choice of the penalty or the result of the play.

b. When both teams commit an infraction during the same live ball period, regardless of the severity, the down is automatically replayed.

c. When a live ball foul by one team is followed by a dead ball foul by the opponent, the penalties are administered separately and in the order of occurrence. When the same team commits a live ball foul followed by 1 or more dead ball fouls, all fouls may be penalized.

d. All unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are penalized as a dead ball foul.

e. If a fight occurs on the playing field, all team substitutes are to remain in their team box. If a substitute enters the field to observe, separate participants, become involved in the fight, or whatever, he/she will be disqualified and a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be enforced from the succeeding spot. Each individual substitute who enters illegally will be disqualified and penalized. Entering substitutes who are on the field for substitution purposes before the fight will not be penalized for being there if they do not participate in the fight.

f. The second unsportsmanlike conduct penalty by the same player or non-player results in disqualification.

g. Establishing a Zone Line-to-Gain- Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement which occurs **prior** to the "ready for play" signal shall be administered **BEFORE** setting the zone line-to-gain box for a new series.

h. Establishing a Zone Line-to-Gain- Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement, which occur **after** the "ready for play" signal shall be administered **AFTER** setting the zone line-to-gain box for a new series.

i. Loose Ball Play. Exception: The penalty for roughing the passer on a completed forward pass will be enforced from the end of the last run when the run ends beyond the neutral zone and no change of possession has occurred ("tack on").

j. Safety/Goal Line. For a defensive foul, if the enforcement spot which is now the basic spot, is on or behind the offended team's goal line any measurement is from the succeeding spot or goal line.

Five Yard Penalties
- Failure to properly wear required player equipment - Encroachment - Illegal substitution - Illegal formation, motion, shift, snap (dead ball), or procedure - Helping the runner - Delay of game - False start (dead ball) - Illegal position (offensive player not within 15 yards of the ball)

Ten Yard Penalties
- Personal foul - Kick catch interference - Illegal participation - Hurdling - Protecting/guarding the flag - Illegal removal of the flag belt - Illegal batting - Illegal use of hands, arms, legs or body - Unsportsmanlike conduct (including use of illegal equipment) - Unnecessary roughness - Tackling the runner (**AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFICATION**) - Fighting (an attempt by a player or non-player to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football) includes acts such as attempting to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s), or foot (feet), whether or not there is contact (**AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFICATION**) - Intentionally contacting a game official physically (**AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFICATION**) - Defensive pass interference (if intentional or flagrant, the team may be penalized an additional 10 yards) - Offensive pass interference (10 yards) - Roughing the passer, plus automatic first down - Steal or attempt to steal ball from ball carrier - Consecutive encroachments in the same interval between downs - Illegally secured flag belt (if by Team A will also result in player disqualification and loss of down, if by Team B will also result in player disqualification and automatic first down) - UNFAIR ACTS

Loss of Down Penalties
- Illegal forward pass if by Team A (5 yards) - Illegally secured flag belt on a touchdown or Try by Team A (**AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFICATION**) - Illegal backward pass if by Team A (5 yards)

III. Forfeits

A game shall be forfeited for violation of the following: If a team scheduled to play, fails to place at least 4 eligible players at the start of the game or drops below 4 players and, in the opinion of the Referee, no longer has a chance to win; if a team or any member of a team shall delay the progress of a game, the opposing team could be declared the winner; if a player or manager engages in an argument with officials and refuses to continue the game, he/she will be ordered off the field. Failure to comply with the officials could mean a forfeit for his/her team. In case of a double forfeit, both teams will be charged with a loss.

IV. Ejections

A. If any player is ejected from the game he/she shall be automatically suspended for a minimum of one game, additional punishment could be handed down pending review by GRPD staff.

B. If a coach is ejected they will be suspended from the next two (2) games for the 1st offense. For the 2nd offense the coach will be suspended from coaching with Greenville Recreation & Parks Department in all sports for one (1) year.

C. Players or coaches who strike or attempt to strike or threaten harm in any way on a parent, site supervisor, or official will be suspended from Greenville Recreation & Parks programs and charges will be filed.

Factors that may suggest a more lenient penalty include:	Factors that may suggest a harsher penalty include:
- First offense - Apparent desire to reform	- Personal attack on GRPD staff - Violation of law

V. Tournament

A. The 7-8 year old and 9-12 year old divisions will have a post-season single elimination tournament that will begin at the conclusion of the regular season/ rain make-up games. It is the coach's responsibility to pick up schedules or call the Athletic Office following the regular season and/rain make-up games.

B. Seeding in the tournament will be determined by the regular season standings in the division. In case of a tie for the regular season, tournament seeding will be based on (ranking order):

1. Head to head match-ups between the tied teams; if still tied
2. Points allowed during the season; if still tied
3. Points scored during the season; if still tied
4. There will be a coin toss by GRPD staff to determine seedings.

VI. Inclement Weather

A. Games shall be postponed when GRPD determines the field to be unplayable. **Managers** should contact the Recreation & Parks Department **AFTER** 12pm, and players should contact their coaches**.** Game status updates will be available by calling the weather hotline at (252) 329-4299.

B. Under most conditions, a game will not be canceled. Coaches need to make sure they have the official word from the Referee at the field or athletic staff that a game has been canceled. The original schedule will not be changed. Rained out games will be made up at the end of the regular season play, as much as possible.

C. All suspended games will resume at the exact point where they were stopped.

D. Teams will be given a Rainedout.com informational sheet. Team managers and players are encouraged to sign up for this service that will notify them when games are canceled (standard text messaging rates will apply).

E. The City of Greenville has developed the following inclement weather guidelines to ensure early response in various inclement weather situations. The National Weather Service issues weather advisories, watches and warnings to inform the public of inclement weather. Staff will stay attuned to these advisories and modify programs accordingly. Inclement weather judgment calls to cancel, suspend, postpone and resume are case by case depending on the forecast, radar development and visual observations of the sky. Should any of the following triggers occur causing undesirable and unsafe conditions, staff will alert the cancelation, suspension or postponement of an activity by using a whistle, air horn or megaphone. Participants, volunteers and other staff will be directed to a safe location until the threat or danger has passed and activities can resume.

Weather events include:

- Extreme Temperatures
- Severe thunderstorm watch or warning
- Lightning
- High winds
- A tornado sighting or warning

EXTREME TEMPERATURES

HEAT ADVISORIES

The heat index ranges issued by the National Weather Service range from little danger from heat; 65 º - 81 º too dangerous to health; 106 º - 115 º and above. High air temperatures and relative humidity distress individuals differently. Parents of children, adult participants and staff should take into consideration their own physical health conditions in making the decision to participate in an outdoor activity during a heat advisory. Proper hydration including the use of sunscreen, resting in shaded areas and wearing proper attire will be emphasized.

Action:

Staff will monitor heat index levels along with other weather related variables to determine if an activity needs to be postponed.

WINTER WEATHER

Program modification may take place when temperatures are forecasted to be or fall below 40 degrees. Outdoor activities may be cancelled or moved indoors. If temperatures fall below 40 degrees during an activity, staff will monitor the situation and act if necessary.

Action:

In the event of inclement weather involving snow and ice, program modification and a change to facility operating hours may take place. Any closings or adjustments to facility hours will be determined by the City Manager or Director of Recreation and Parks. Decisions regarding cancellations or adjustments to programs can be made by Recreation staff.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

Staff will monitor all available weather alerts issued by the National Weather Service, media and what is visibly seen and heard while outdoors. A severe thunderstorm can produce damaging winds up to 58mph with heavy down pours, and possible hail. There is a potential risk of flying debris, localized flooding and lightning strikes.

LIGHTNING AND THUNDER

Program modification will take place when lightning is detected within 10 miles of the facility by radar, visual monitoring or if thunder is heard. Staff will monitor all available weather alerts issued by the National Weather Service, media and that is seen and heard while outdoors. Lightning is an electric spark discharge in the atmosphere, occurring within a thundercloud, between clouds, or between a cloud and the ground. Lightning is very dangerous and is accompanied by tremendous flashes and roars of thunder. Outdoor activities will be suspended when lightning is detected within 10 miles of the facility. The location of lightning can be determined by the NWS, a storm monitoring device and by counting time between thunder and lightning strikes. Once lightning is seen, count the number of seconds until you hear thunder. Divide the number of seconds by 5. The answer is distance in miles of the lightning. Therefore, 10 miles would be 50 seconds.

Action:

If lightning is seen, or thunder heard, immediately suspend outdoor activities. Seek shelter* immediately and avoid trees, canopies, or tents. No activity will resume until there is no less than 30 minutes from the last strike or from the last sound of thunder is heard. Staff will keep track of time to ensure activities are not resumed until it is safe. Once the threat and danger has passed staff will announce that it is safe for the activity or event to resume.

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electric charge. Therefore, it is safe to perform CPR, if needed. Ideally, injured persons are moved into a safe shelter. Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need emergency help.

WIND

Program modification will take place when strong gusts of wind are detected by radar. Staff will monitor all available weather alerts issued by the National Weather Service, media and take initiative to secure loose objects to prevent objects from becoming airborne projectiles.

Action:
In conditions of winds reaching 58 MPH or higher (according to NWS weather reports) outdoor activities are to be suspended. All participants and staff will be advised to immediately seek cover indoors or in an enclosed vehicle away from trees or areas where things can become airborne. Once the threat and danger has passed staff will inspect the area to ensure it is safe and announce that it is safe for the activity or event to resume.

TORNADO WARNINGS & WATCHES

A **Watch** means there is a potential for a Tornado or the Tornado exists and a **Warning** means it is happening or very likely to happen. Program modification will take place when a tornado warning is issued. Staff will monitor all available weather alerts issued by the National Weather Service and media. Immediate action will be taken to safe guard the health and well-being of all individuals in the immediate area.

Action:
When a tornado warning is issued within Pitt County, outdoor activities will be suspended. Staff will advise all participants, staff and spectators to immediately move indoors and seek shelter*. Participants and staff will be directed to an area indoors away from windows and doors. Staff will continue to monitor the location of the tornado and prepare participants to respond. Large gym areas will be avoided at this time. Staff will instruct participants to get under a heavy piece of furniture or inside interior closets if the tornado threatens the immediate area. Participants and staff will assume the protective position by squatting low to the floor and covering their head. Children, visitors and participants may need guidance to prepare for a tornado. Never remove a person from a wheelchair. Have them bend over safely and put their hands over their head. Once the threat and danger has passed staff will check the health and well-being of all participants, contact EMS if there are injuries, access damage and guide participants to safety.

SHELTER*

Shelter is defined as an ideal safe structure or fully enclosed building with plumbing, telephone and electrical service, which aid in grounding the structure. A fully enclosed automobile or school bus with all the windows rolled up is a reasonable shelter, although care must be taken to avoid contact with any metal inside the vehicle. Golf carts and convertible cars are not safe shelters. Dugouts and golf shelters are not safe shelters and are not grounded for the effects of lightening.

Avoid the use of shower facilities for shelter and do not use showers or plumbing during a thunderstorm; electrical current from lightening can enter the building through plumbing connections. It is also unsafe to stand near utilities or use a landline telephone during a thunderstorm because of the risk of the current traveling through the lines. Cellular and cordless telephones are safe.

If a suitable safe shelter is not available, it is best to avoid tall objects (trees, light poles, etc) that allow lightning an easy path to the ground. It is important to avoid being the tallest object. In an open field, people should crouch with their legs together, the weight on the balls of their feet, arms wrapped around their knees, and head down with their ears covered. The person should minimize contact with the ground and should not lie flat.