



Flag Football Official Rules

Table of Contents

RULES	Page
I. Game	2
II. Terminology	2
III. Eligibility	2
IV. Equipment	3
V. Field	3
VI. Rosters	3
VII. Timing	3
VIII. Scoring	4
IX. Coaches	4
X. Live Ball/ Dead Ball	4
XI. Running	4 & 5
XII. Passing	5
XIII. Receiving	5
XIV. Rushing the Passer	5
XV. Flag Pulling	6
XVI. Formations	6
XVII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct	6
XVIII. Penalties	6 & 7
i. General	
ii. 5 Yard Penalties	
iii. 10 Yard Penalties	
iv. Spot Fouls	
v. Defense	
vi. Offense	

I. Game

- 1 At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
- 2 The winner of the coin toss gets first offensive possession. The loser of the coin toss chooses the end zone it would prefer to defend. Teams may choose to defer to second half choice.
- 3 The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has (4) more chances to score a touchdown.
- 4 If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 12-yard line.
- 5 If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 12-yard line.
- 6 All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
- 7 Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the loser of the coin toss.

NOTE:

IF THE OFFENSE FAILS TO CROSS MID-FIELD OR SCORE A TD, THE DEFENSE GETS THE BALL AT THE 12-YARD LINE.

IF THE OFFENSE SCORES A TD THE DEFENSE GETS THE BALL AT THE 5-YARD LINE

II. Terminology

Boundary Lines	the outer perimeter lines around the field (the sidelines, and the rear end zone lines).
Line Of Scrimmage	an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
Line-To-Gain	the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
Rush Line	an imaginary line running across the field the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the Line Of scrimmage.
Offense	the squad with possession of the ball
Defense	the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball
Passer	the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the QB.
Rusher	the defensive player assigned to rush the QB to prevent him/ her from passing by pulling his/ her flags or blocking the pass.
Downs (1-2-3)	the offensive squad has three attempt or "Downs" to advance the ball. They must cross the Line To Gain to get another set of downs or score.
Live Ball	the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regards to penalties, Live Ball Penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
Dead Ball	the period of time immediately before or after a play.
Whistle	the sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or stop in the action for timeout, halftime or the end of the game.
Inadvertent Whistle	an official's whistle that is performed in error.
Charging	the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, chest or forearm.
Flag Guarding	an act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.
Shovel Pass	a legal pass attempted behind the LOS by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner.
Lateral	a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	rude, confrontational or offensive behavior.

III. Eligibility

- 1 A player's age must fall within the specified range as of August 6th of the current year.

IV. Equipment

- 1 The League will provide each player with flag football jerseys and each team a football.
- 2 Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed, however cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
- 3 Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
- 4 Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the official's deem dangerous.
- 5 Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.
- 6 Headwear with hard brims are not allowed.
- 7 Shirts with hoods must have the hood tucked in or removed.

V. Field

- 1 The recommended field size is 30 yards by 70 yards with 10-yard end zones and a mid-field line-to-gain. No-Running Zones precede each Line-to-Gain by 5 yards.
- 2 No Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays.
While in the No Run Zones (a 5 yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams may not run the ball in any fashion. All plays, including those that begin with a handoff, must be pass plays.
- 3 Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- 4 Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

REFERENCE FIELD
DIAGRAM ON PAGE 7

VI. Rosters

- 1 Teams must field a minimum of (5) players at all times.

VII. Timing

- 1 Games are played on a 48 minute continuous clock. The clock stops only for timeouts.
- 2 Halftime is three minutes long
- 3 Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- 4 Each team has two (2) 60-second time outs per half. **(time outs DO NOT rollover into 2nd half or OT)**
- 5 Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- 6 In the event on an injury the clock will stop and then restart once the injured player is removed from the field of play.
- 7 If the score is tied at the end of 50 minutes, the game should be determined a tie.

VIII. Scoring

- 1 Touchdown: **6 points**
- 2 PAT (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (12-yard line) *NOTE: 1 point PAT is pass only, 2 point PAT can be run or pass).*
- 3 Safety: **2 points**
 - a. A Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/ her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A Safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.
- 4 A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt. conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-pt. conversion (from the 12-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on the conversions cannot be returned.
- 5 Mercy rule: After one team is winning by twenty-eight points or more, the losing team gets one offensive series to continue regulation play. If they do not score, the game goes into scrimmage mode playing up to the fifteen minute mark in the second half if time allows.
After the fifteen minute mark, the game is over.
- 6 Scrimmage Mode: The losing team gets the ball for up to three possessions. Each possession lasts until the team scores or fails to achieve the Line-To-gain. Points do not count in the final score.
After three possessions the game is over.

IX. Coaches

- 1 Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all time.
- 2 Coaches are not allowed on the field to direct players according to need and bracket. Coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball.
- 3 Coaches are expected to adhere to the HYSA philosophies, coaching guidelines and codes of conduct.
- 4 Only three coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines.
- 5 **ALL COACHES ARE REQUIRED TO FILL OUT A BACKGROUND CHECK FORM**

X. Live Ball/ Dead Ball

- 1 The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- 2 The official will indicate the neutral zone and the line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back beyond the line.
- 3 A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
- 4 The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play.
- 5 Substitutions may be made any dead ball.
- 6 Any official can whistle the play dead.
- 7 Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - a. the ball hits 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 or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball carrier's flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one flag.
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. An inadvertent whistle is performed (at the spot where the ball was whistled dead).
- 8 In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where the whistle blew.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.

- 9 A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call. If the ruling is correct the team will be charged a time out.

XI. Running

- 1 The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. If one foot precedes the other, the forward foot marks the spot.
- 2 **The QB CANNOT directly run with the ball.**
- 3 Absolutely NO laterals or pitches beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 4 "No-Run Zones", located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield, are designed to avoid short-yardage, power running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones IF the subsequent line is LIVE (Reminder: Each offensive squad 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).
- 5 The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- 6 Once the ball has been handed off in front or behind the QB, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- 7 Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping is considered flag guarding.
- 8 Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
- 9 Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/ she has done so to avoid a collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty being enforced.
- 10 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.

XII. Passing

- 1 All passes must be made from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage. (SCREEN PASSES ARE ALLOWED)
- 2 Shovel passes are allowed, but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 3 The QB has a seven-second "pass clock". If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the seven second rule no longer is effect.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the seven-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).

XIII. Receiving

- 1 All players are eligible to receive passes (including the QB if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- 2 Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
- 3 A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- 4 In the case of a simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- 5 Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of the interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that DO NOT start on the 5-yard line.
- 6 Interceptions are returnable, but not on conversions after touchdowns.

XIV. Rushing the Passer

- 1 All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the QB. Players not rushing the QB may defend on the line of scrimmage.
- 2 Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- 3 A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. **A legal rush is:**
 - i. Any rush from a point seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the QB
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the Rush Line early, they may return to the Rush Line, reset and then legally rush the QB.
 - iv. If a rusher leaves the Rush Line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the QB.
 - b. **A penalty may be called if:**
 - i. The rusher leaves the Rush Line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass - **Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down)**
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped - **Offsides (5 yards LOS and first down)**
 - iii. Any defensive player, not lined up at the Rush Line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is handed off or passed - **Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down)**
 - c. **Special circumstances:**
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the QB, seven second clock in effect.
 - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play, however if they do send a rusher, the rusher must check with the official.
 - iii. If rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/ she may immediately drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced.
- 4 Players rushing the QB may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the QB in any way.
- 5 Offense cannot make contact with the rusher in any way.
- 6 Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a 10-yard penalty.
- 7 A sack occurs if the QB's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the QB's feet are when the flag is pulled.
 - a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

XV. Flag Pulling

- 1 A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- 2 Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags
- 3 It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- 4 If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
- 5 A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a defender who is not in possession of the ball.
- 6 Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping of head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football or jersey.

XVI. Formations

- 1 An offensive team must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The QB must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1 yard beyond and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. no motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
- 2 Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/ she is the one player in motion.
- 3 Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
- 4 The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/ her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/ her hands.

XVII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- 1 If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player(s) will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals! **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**
- 2 Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the players will be ejected from the game.
- 3 Players may not physically or verbally abuse an opponent or official.
- 4 Ball carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders that have established position.
- 5 Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- 6 Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. keep comments clean and profanity clean.
 - c. compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
- 7 Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly:
 - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents away from the sidelines.

XVIII. Penalties

i. General

- 1 The referees will call all penalties
- 2 Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- 3 All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (spot fouls).
- 4 Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgement calls.
- 5 Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- 6 Penalties are assessed Live Ball then Dead Ball. Live Ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- 7 Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

ii. 5 Yard Penalties

- x Illegal Equipment
- x Offside
- x Illegal motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc.)
- x Illegal forward pass (pass received behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass beyond the line of scrimmage)
- x Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/ away defender)
- x Delay of game
- x Defense illegal contact (holding, blocking, etc.)
- x Defense illegal flag pulling (before receiver has ball)
- x Defense illegal rushing (starting rush from inside the 7-yard marker)

iii. 10 Yard Penalties

- x Roughing the passer
- x Taunting
- x Unsportsmanlike conduct
 - After scoring and touchdown is good, offense receives a 10-yard penalty from the yard line of PAT attempt after touchdown (one warning to the player and team before ejection)

iv. Spot Fouls

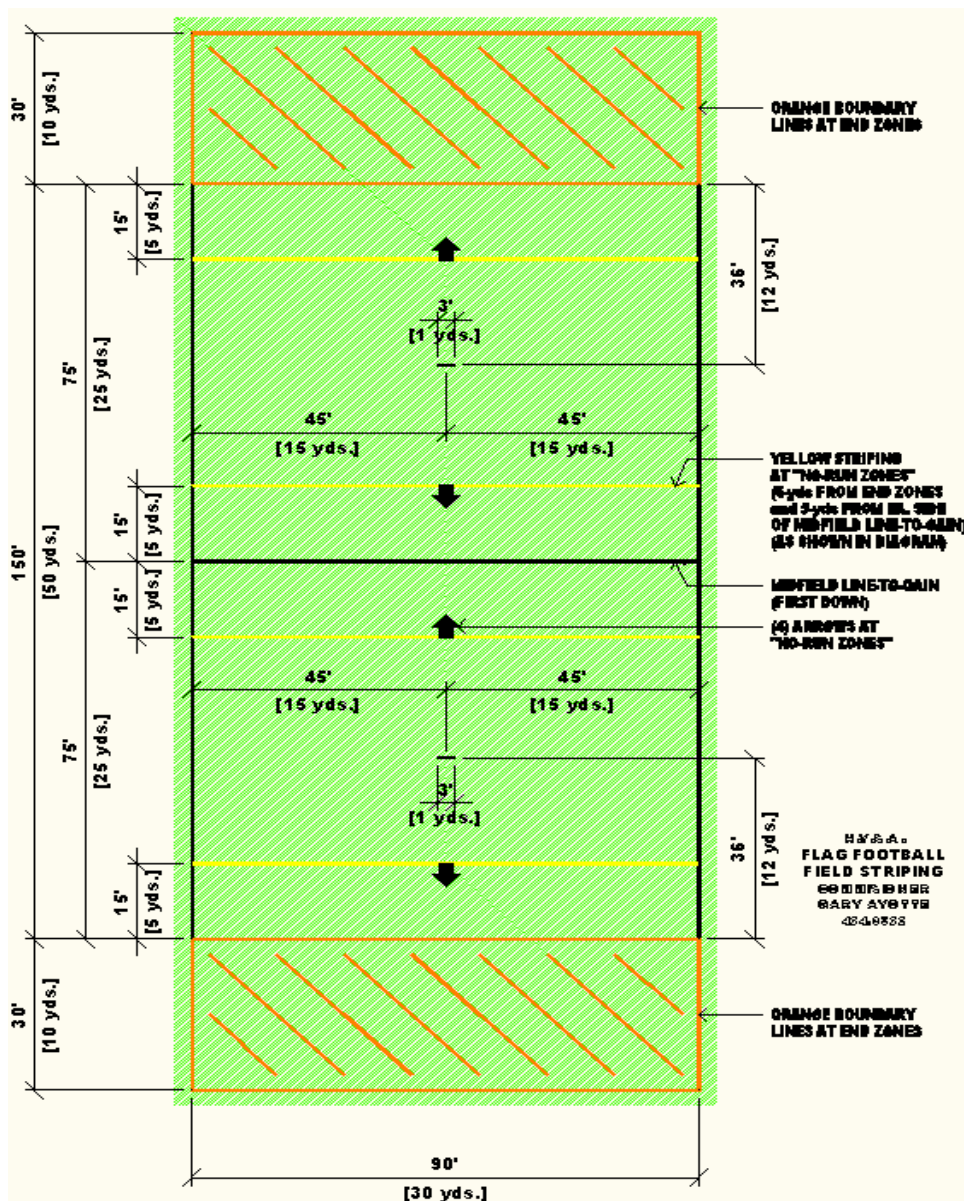
x	Flag guarding	10 yard & loss of down
x	Charging	10 yard & loss of down
x	Defensive Pass Interference	first down
x	Stripping	10 yard & loss of down
x	Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	10 yard & loss of down
x	Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	10 yard & loss of down

v. Defense

x	Offside	5 yards from LOS & automatic 1st down
x	Illegal contact (holding, blocking, etc.)	5 yards from LOS & automatic 1st down
x	Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)	5 yards from LOS & automatic 1st down
x	Illegal rushing (starting rush from outside 7-yard marker)	5 yards from LOS & automatic 1st down
x	Roughing the passer	10 yards from LOS & automatic 1st down
x	Taunting	10 yards from LOS & automatic 1st down
x	Unnecessary Roughness	Spot Foul, 10 yards & automatic 1st down
x	Defensive Pass Interference	Spot Foul, 10 yards & automatic 1st down
x	Stripping	Spot Foul, 10 yards & automatic 1st down

vi. Offense

x	Illegal motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc.)	5 yards from LOS & loss of down
x	Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/ away defender)	5 yards from LOS & loss of down
x	Flag guarding	10 yard & loss of down
x	Charging	10 yard & loss of down
x	Delay of game	5 yards from LOS & loss of down
x	Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	10 yard & loss of down
x	Offside	5 yards from LOS & loss of down



BASIC RULES ALL REFEREES and COACHES NEED TO KNOW (REFERENCE YOUR RULE BOOK FOR ADDITIONAL RULES):

- 1 Each team gets four (4) downs to cross the mid-field line-to-gain (first down) or to score a Touchdown
- 2 All offensive possessions start at the 5-yard line except for interceptions and (reference rules 3 and 4)
- 3 If the offensive team scores a TD, the defense gets the ball at the 5-yard line (reward offense for scoring)
- 4 If the offensive team fails to score a TD, the defense gets the ball at the 12-yard line (reward defense for preventing the 1st down/ score)
- 5 Each team has two (2) 60-second time outs per half. **(time outs DO NOT rollover into 2nd half or OT)**
- 6 The games are split into two 24 minute halves with halftime being 3 minutes long
- 7 The **QB CANNOT** directly run with the ball. (reference rule 8 in rule book)
- 8 Once the ball has been handed off in front or behind the QB, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- 9 Absolutely NO laterals or pitches beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 10 Screen passes are allowed
- 11 The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- 12 NO RUN ZONES 5 yards preceding the mid-field line-to-gain or the end zones
- 13 No hard brimmed hats, hoods (unless tucked in), metal braces, jewelry, metal cleats
- 14 NO flag guarding, stiff-arming, tackling
- 15 **BLOCKING:** blockers have to have there arms at there side or straight down in back of them (it will be like playing defense in basketball without using your hands). The blocker may follow the defender (this includes the rusher) but not be the aggressor (cannot go after the defender). Double teaming the rusher is NOT allowed. One-on-one blocking ONLY.
- 16 The rusher has to start 7 yards behind the LOS. Rusher can go inside the 7 yard rush line and still rush if the rusher FIRST returns to the seven yard mark behind the LOS before crossing the LOS (reference section XIV in the rule book for futher description)

XVIII. Penalties**i. General**

- 1 Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- 2 All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (spot fouls).
- 3 Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgement calls.
- 4 Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- 5 Penalties are assessed Live Ball then Dead Ball. Live Ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- 6 Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

ii. 5 Yard Penalties

- x Illegal Equipment
- x Offside **(5+Automatic 1st down (defensive)) (5-loss of down (offensive))**
- x Illegal motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc.) **(5-loss of down)**
- x Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/ away defender) **(5-loss of down)**
- x Delay of game **(5-loss of down)**
- x Defense illegal contact (holding, blocking, etc.) **(5+ Auotmatic 1st down)**
- x Defense illegal flag pulling (before receiver has ball) **(5+ Auotmatic 1st down)**
- x Defense illegal rushing (starting rush from inside the 7-yard marker) **(5+ Auotmatic 1st down)**

iii. 10 Yard Penalties

- x Roughing the passer **(10+Automatic 1st down)**
- x Taunting **(10+Automatic 1st down (defensive)) (10-loss of down (offensive))**
- x Unsportsmanlike conduct
-After scoring and touchdown is good, offense receives a 10-yard penalty from the yard line of PAT attempt after touchdown (one warning to the player and team before ejection)

iv. Spot Fouls

- x Flag guarding 10 yard & loss of down
- x Charging 10 yard & loss of down
- x Defensive Pass Interference Spot Foul, 10 yards & automatic 1st down
- x Stripping Spot Foul, 10 yards & automatic 1st down
- x Offensive Unnecessary Roughness 10 yard & loss of down
- x Defensive Unnecessary Roughness Spot Foul, 10 yards & automatic 1st down

v. Offense

- x Flag guarding 10 yard & loss of down