

Cincinnati Sports Leagues
OFFICIAL MEN'S FLAG FOOTBALL RULES
(Yardage for 1st down and paid referees)

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OVERVIEW

FLAG

7 players on the field

Two 20-minute halves

Must cross two 10 yard markers for a 1st down

6 point touchdowns

Choice of 1 or 2 extra points on PAT's (*3 paces/yards for 1 Pt., 10 paces/yards for 2 pts.*)

TWO POINT CONVERSION ATTEMPTS MAY BE INTERCEPTED AND RETURNED FOR TWO POINTS

Dead ball on all fumbles that hit the ground

A lateral (that is clearly in mid-air or a fumble that is in mid-air) CAN be picked off in mid-air and run back by the defense for yardage. No ripping balls from the offense.

Quarterbacks cannot snap the ball to themselves

Running clock except for final two minutes of 2nd half

Ties during regular season stay as a tie

Four-Downs-and-Out format applies for ties in the playoffs.

Receivers need only one foot in-bounds with possession of the ball to be considered "in bounds"

COIN FLIP/BEGINNING OF GAME

- The team that wins the coin flip (or a one-time Ro-Sham-Bo) at the start of the game must choose one of two options: 1) offense, 2) defense, 3) direction (TEAMS CANNOT DEFER). Teams flip flop direction, and the team that started the game on defense will start the second half on offense. There are no kick-offs. Play starts at 10 paces/yards from the goal line.

TEAM SIZE

- Each team shall field no more than 7 players. CSL allows teams to start a game with 5 players minimum. Teams not able to field the minimum number of players (5) may play with the consent of the opposing captain and/or league staff. **(Please note : if a team arrives with less than 5 players a forfeit is also an option for the opposing captain.)** Games will start no later than 10-minutes past the scheduled start time. At that time, it is up to the referee or staff member and opposing captain to allow play. Games that start late may not be allowed to break for half-time.
- If a team substitutes players during the game, they must do so from the same sideline the entire game.
- Eligible receivers must be on the playing field *before* the cadence is started.

DOWNFIELD BLOCKING

NO downfield blocking! A player may shadow block for his teammate, but no contact is allowed. PICKING off a defensive player by initiating contact is considered downfield blocking, this is not

allowed. Due to the danger of picking, a player may be ejected if such an action persists. See Penalties section of rules.

DEFENSIVE CHECKING

One open handed bump within 5 yards of the line of scrimmage is allowable (at the discretion of the ref). Riding the offensive player for the first five yards will not be tolerated. Any obvious repeated contact within the first 5 paces/yds. or ANY contact past 5 paces/yds. will result in the appropriate penalty.

TIME

Play will be divided into (2) 20 minute halves. Teams will flip-flop sides at the half, and the team that started the game on defense will start the second half on offense. There will be a running clock maintained by a referee except for the final 2 minutes of play. During the first 38 minutes, the clock runs continuously with the exception of time-outs and serious injury. Each team is allowed two (one-minute) time outs per game. In the first 38 minutes if a team takes a time out after a touchdown, prior to the extra point attempt, the clock will not start until the defensive team takes over on offense and snaps the ball.

There will be a **2-minute warning**. Clock will stop at the 2 minute mark or if a play is in progress the clock will stop at the conclusion of the play.

During the final 2 minutes of the game, the referee shall stop the game clock if:

- an incomplete pass is thrown
- a player ends play by going out of bounds
- either team scores (clock will remain off until the opposing team snaps the ball after the PAT attempt; the clock does not run during extra points)
- change of possession
- a penalty which must be marked off occurs
- a team declares a punt and their "30 seconds" (see below) has elapsed - the clock will resume for the punt and the ensuing return. It will be stopped when the returnee is tagged and up until their first snap from scrimmage.
- A team calls a time out.

*****THE CLOCK DOES NOT STOP ON FIRST DOWNS.**

For the entire game, the offensive team has **30** seconds to snap the ball once the referee places the ball. If the referee feels that this is being taken advantage of, they can:

- On the first recognized abuse - Stop the clock.
- On subsequent abuses - Stop clock, and penalize the offense 5 paces/yards.

*** If a team is up by 17 points or more, the clock runs continuously during the last two minutes of play.*

TIE GAMES/SCORING

Games ending in a tie score will be recorded as tie games during regular season play. Please refer to the OVERTIME section for ties during the playoffs. Touchdowns are awarded 6 pts. Extra points: 3 paces/yards off the goal line = 1 pt., 10 paces/yards = 2pts.

NEW RULE: Two point conversion attempts may be intercepted and returned for two points with the defense retaining possession at the 10 pace/yard line. One point attempts may not be intercepted and returned.

FIRST DOWNS

Each team shall have 4 downs to either score or earn another first down. First downs are achieved when a team crosses two 10 yd. markers based on their original field position. If a team fails to

score or earn a first down, possession will go to the other team. Offensive teams may elect to punt on fourth downs

PUNTS

A punt must be declared and cannot be faked. All punts are "free" punts. A team need not snap during a punt, a dropped snap during a punt is not a fumble. **Punts must be kicked.** Punts cannot be thrown.. There is no minimum number of players required on the line of scrimmage during a punt. **NO DOWNFIELD BLOCKING or BLOCKING AT THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE.** The kicking team may not cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked.

The receiving team may not raise hands or jump to block a punt. If a punt is "shanked" and caught it is a live ball and is returnable. If the ball comes into contact with the ground after it has been punted it is a dead ball, spotted at the point where it hit the ground, and may not be returned. A punt through the end-zone comes back to 10 paces/yards off the goal line. If a player drops the ball in the endzone, the ball is again spotted 10 paces/yards out from the goal line and is **not** counted as a safety.

CONTINUANCE OF PLAY

Play shall continue until:

- Ball-carrier has at least one flag pulled by an opponent (see flag specifics for the few exceptions/additions concerning flag pulling)
- Ball-carrier leaves the field of play
- Ball-carrier scores
- Ball touches the ground as a result of a fumble, punt or incomplete pass (the ball is not an extension of the arm. If the ball is pinned between the ground and the ball carriers hand, the play is dead)
- Ball-Carrier's knee touches the ground

SPOT OF THE BALL

The ball will be spotted where the ball is at the time the ball carries flag is pulled. If the ball crosses the plane of the goal line before the ball carriers flag has been pulled it will result in a touchdown (ball extension).

TURNOVERS

A change of possession can occur due to downs, an interception on a forward pass, **AND AN INTERCEPTED BACKWARD LATERAL.** A lateral (that is clearly in mid-air or a fumble that is in mid-air) **CAN** be picked off in mid-air and run back by the defense for yardage. Players may not "rip" the ball from a ball carrier (this will result in 5 pace/yard penalty tagged on to point of infraction). A fumble or lateral hitting the ground is not a turnover. The ball is dead at the point of the fumble/lateral hitting the ground and the offense retains possession.

RUSH

Immediate rush.

PENALTIES

Normal rules and penalties of the NCAA apply unless exceptions have been made herein.

Some Common Examples of Penalties:

Illegal Contact - Down Field:

- 5 paces/yards from point where ball carrier is at the time of infraction.

Offsides (Offensive):

- 5 paces/yards, play is ruled dead immediately down is replayed.

Offsides / Illegal or Early Rush (Defensive):

- 5 paces/yards. Flag thrown at time of infraction, offense has option to decline.

Illegal Motion:

- Only 1 (one) player can be in motion at the time of the snap. (Note: You can have two players in motion but only 1 (one) at the time of the snap. Players may not be in motion towards the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. This will result in a dead ball, five yard penalty and repeat the down.

Offensive Picking/Interference:

- The offensive team may not initiate a pick/block while in motion. 10pace/yard penalty from the line of scrimmage, loss of down (i.e. if it was 1st down during the penalty, it is now 2nd down). If a catch is made after a clear pick, it will be ruled no catch, 10ace/yard penalty from line of scrimmage, and loss of down.

Remember: Some acceptable incidental contact will occur while running routes and within the normal course of play, and will not be called.

Unnecessary Roughness:

- This includes any illegal tag such as grabbing jerseys or excessive pushing etc. This behavior will result in a 10pace/yard penalty from point of the infraction. Extreme roughness will result in ejection from the game and or league if deemed necessary by the referee and league staff.

Defensive Pass Interference:

- Ball is spotted at the point of the infraction and offense is awarded an automatic first down. If the pass interference is in the end-zone, the ball comes out to the 1 pace/yard line and it will be 1st down.

Defensive Holding:

- 5 pace/yard penalty from line of scrimmage, replay down. Offense can accept or decline the penalty.

Defensive Checking:

- One open, two handed bump within 5 paces/yards of the line of scrimmage is allowable (at the discretion of the ref). Riding the offensive player for the first five yards will not be tolerated. Any obvious repeated contact within the first 5 yds.. will result in a 5 pace/yard penalty from line of scrimmage, replay down, offense can accept or decline the penalty.

Intentional Grounding

- This penalty will be called when a passer facing an imminent loss of yardage because of pressure from the defense, throws a forward pass, without a realistic chance of completion. This will result a loss of down (i.e. if it was 1st down during the penalty,

it is now 2nd down). And the ball being spotted at the point of infraction (QB's point of release).

Safeties:

- A safety will be scored if a player is:
 1. -tagged down in their own endzone (not on a punt return)
 2. -runs out of bounds in their own endzone
 3. -snaps the ball out of the endzone
 4. -if the offense fumbles the ball in their own endzone

As a result, the team on defense, receives 2 points, and the team on offense must now punt a "free" kick from their own 10 paces/yard line.

Also, a player having intercepted a pass or received a punt in the endzone, cannot be tagged in the endzone for a safety unless he/she has previously crossed the plane of the endzone with the ball.

Miscellaneous:

- Diving into or over a defensive player, where offensive player is initiating contact (in the eyes of the referee) will result in the player being down at his point of takeoff
- Ball-carrier who initiates excessive contact (i.e. overly aggressive spin moves, dipping shoulders, using elbows, kicking) will result in 5 pace/ yard penalty from point of infraction
- Sneak Plays: If the player calling the cadence does not receive the snap, the play will not stand and result in a 5 pace/yard penalty and repeat of the down. One person must call the cadence and receive the snap. Silent snaps will not be allowed
- If the QB crosses the line of scrimmage and then throws a forward pass the defense can either decline the penalty or it will be a 5 pace/yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and loss of down (i.e. if it was 1st down during the penalty, it is now 2nd down).
- If the ball hits the ground on the snap for either a pass or running play, the play is "dead", the ball is spotted where it hit the ground, and it is a loss of down (i.e. if it was 1st down during the bad snap, it is now 2nd down).
- The defense cannot hit the QB's throwing arm for any reason while the ball is in the QB's possession. Penalty will result in 10 yards/paces from the line of scrimmage and automatic first-down.
- The QB may NOT snap the ball to himself. If the QB does snap to himself, play will stop immediately and result in a 5 yard/paces penalty and repeat the down.

FLAG SPECIFICS

- 1) No flag guarding *** **Will result in a 5 paces/yard penalty from the spot of infraction. Defensive player returning an interception, who flag guards, will be penalized 5 paces/yards from the spot of infraction.**
- 2) Shirt must be tucked in and flags must be securely attached. Loose hanging articles (i.e. sweatshirts, long T-shirts, etc.) that are held/ripped will not result in a holding penalty, unless in ref's eyes player was not attempting to go for flag.

- 3) Any ball-carrier whose flags are (in ref's opinion) not accessible to be pulled will be down at 1st point of contact with the defense.
- 4) Any ball-carrier who has a flag or both flags missing for whatever reason (falls out, accidentally pulled before reception, not noticed before snap, etc.) will be down at the first point of contact.
- 5) Players may leave their feet to pull flag.
- 6) Spin moves will be allowed.
- 7) Belt grabbing will result in a 5 paces/yard penalty from end of play.
 - any belt grabbing at the end of a half or game will result in a 5 paces/yard penalty from point of infraction and replay of down.
 - if this penalty occurs within 5 paces/yard of the endzone, the ball will be spotted at the one yard line and the offense will receive one play.

OVERTIME

During regular season play, all ties will be scored as a tie. In the playoffs, however, the Four-Downs and Out format will apply. A coin toss (or Ro-Sham-Bo) with the winning team deciding on first or second possession. Teams will attempt to score in the same end zone. Each team will then have 4 downs to score from 10 paces/yards from the goal line. If a team scores, they will have the opportunity to go for one or two on the PAT.. An interception will result in a team losing its possession. The game will be decided when one team scores more points in the rotation. During overtime 1st downs will not be awarded except in the case of a penalty. Interceptions will result in a turnover and may not be returned for any points.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Receivers need only one foot in bounds for a reception. If in the referees eyes a receiver would be able to legally catch a pass but, was pushed out of bounds by a defender while in the air a catch will be awarded.
- Receivers intentionally leaving the field of play are ineligible to receive a pass. This includes the back of the end zone.
- Excessive roughness can get a player/team ejected from the game and or league.
- An offensive player may not advance the ball by jumping or diving. Diving / jumping, where offensive player is initiating contact (in the eyes of the referee) will result in the player being down at his point of takeoff
- A player who catches the ball and lands with 1 or 2 feet across the goal-line, but has his flag pulled before he pulls the ball across the plane of the goal will not be awarded a touchdown. The ball will be spotted at the point of where the ball was at the time he/she was called "down".

LEAGUE POLICIES

GAMES:

During the regular season games are to be played within time allotted (warm up time is included).

REFS:

Cincinnati Sports Leagues will provide paid referee(s) for each game. Referees will have final say in any judgment call or issue regarding rules. Refs have the power to remove any player(s) from a game or league if deemed necessary. Any rule clarification during a game must be brought to the attention of CSL staff member prior to the continuance of the game.

FORFEITS:

If your team forfeits a game during the season, the following rules apply:

First Offense: Loss of game and warning issued.

Second Offense: Loss of game and staff reserves the right to remove team from playoffs.

Third Offense: Removal from the league.

If you know in advance that your team is going to forfeit a game, we encourage you to call our office so as to help us schedule your opponent a game.

Teams have until **ten** minutes past the designated start time to field a full squad (minimum number of players required according to the rules). Anything less must be approved by CSL staff & opposing captain.

STANDINGS:

The updated standings will be posted weekly, displaying each teams rank within its skill level.

Rank is based on winning percentage.

PLAYOFFS:

All eligible teams make the playoffs (teams that have not abused any policies are eligible).

In certain situations teams at or near the bottom of the standings may not advance to the playoffs. Check with CSL league coordinator to see if this applies to your league.

Playoffs are single elimination.

Seeding: Teams are seeded according to winning percentage and strength of schedule.

Teams may be dropped from their regular season level based on the above criteria. Teams may be moved to a higher division during the playoffs only if permission is granted.

Skill levels may be divided into separate divisions based upon size of level.

Teams may play more than one game per day, and/or play games on days/nights other than your regularly scheduled league day/night.

CSL reserves the right to schedule playoff games on days other than your regularly scheduled league night.

Any questions regarding rules, policies, or eligibility must be addressed before the start of the game.

WAIVERS:

In order to participate in the league, each participant must sign the team waiver. Waivers are provided and must be completed and handed in no later than the first night of play. Players not present the first week of play will still be required to sign a waiver with our staff before participating.

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY:

A formal protest may be filed before a game if an opposing player's eligibility is in question. The player in question will be required to provide his/her player information (name, address, phone #, signature) in writing to a CSL staff member prior to the start of the game. This qualifies as an official protest. The game will then be played in its entirety as scheduled. Teams will be notified of all rulings on the identified eligibility discrepancy by the following business day – decisions will not be made on site. If the protest is proven to be legitimate, it will result in the forfeiture of the game in question. Games subsequent to the protested game may be rescheduled.

The above procedure will also apply for any other "logged" protests.

All rulings by CSL staff are considered final.

SPORTSMANSHIP:

The idea of CSL is to have fun. We hope that all participants keep that in mind when becoming involved. Although the games may become intense, you still can be competitive while maintaining good sportsmanship. With this said, any behavior deemed unacceptable by staff may result in suspension and/or ejection from a game or the league.

STAFF:

To coordinate and run the league, our refs and/or staff will be available at all times to help the league run as smoothly as possible. If you have questions regarding schedules, policies, rule interpretations, directions to the bar, etc. please ask.

LEAGUE CANCELLATION/RAINOUT:

Leagues may be cancelled due to existing weather conditions, dangerous or unplayable field conditions, facility constraints, etc. CSL staff makes every effort to play all scheduled games, thus we will not cancel games until absolutely necessary. Therefore, if you are calling concerning a decision on a cancellation, remember we will not have an answer until close to the start of the league.

If the league is cancelled, CSL staff will change the voicemail immediately. CSL will then call all of the captains. If a league is cancelled on site, CSL staff will attempt to contact those teams still scheduled to play the remainder of the league day/night. Depending on the time of cancellation, some teams will have to be notified on site. If we do cancel, follow next week's schedule (ex. If April 13 is cancelled teams should follow the April 20 schedule for their next game). The games that are cancelled will be made up at the end of the season if time allows. In extreme circumstances, CSL reserves the right to run a shortened season without a refund of schedule matches on days other than our regularly scheduled league day/night.

PRIZES/ T-SHIRTS:

Each team will receive one shirt for every paid player on the roster. Rosters will be considered final by the second week of the league and used for distribution of T-shirts. The shirts will be handed out at the sponsor bar during the season. Please look for the announcement at the league designating which nights the shirts will dispensed. Those teams unable to pick up their T-shirts at the sponsor bar must call the office to make arrangements to pick them up at the office. Unfortunately, T-shirts cannot be brought out to the leagues. The CSL cannot guarantee the availability of T-shirts after the last week of regular season, so please pick them up at "T-shirt night" or soon after.

At the completion of the season, the top teams in each division will receive a prize of great emotional, spiritual, and most importantly, social value.

These policies are designed to make the league run as smoothly and safely as possible, and provide continuity for its participants. Each player in the league is responsible for this information: please advise your team of these policies/rules and thanks for playing