

HARRISBURG TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT (HTPD) FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

RULE 1 – THE GAME, PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

- Flag Football is played between two teams of **SEVEN** players on a rectangular field. Each team must have a minimum of 5 eligible players on the field.
- If each team has 8 players, then 8 vs 8 is encouraged. Up to 10 vs 10 is allowed.

PLAYERS AND THEIR EQUIPMENT

- Players on each team must wear jerseys that are similarly colored. Jersey's must not be the same color as the football or of the flags the team is wearing.
- All players must wear pants or shorts. The pants may not be the same or similar color as the football or a player's flags. Pants and shorts cannot have belt loops. Short pants are preferred.
- Every player must wear shoes that completely cover the foot. Metal cleats are hazardous and may **NOT** be worn.
- Players must wear a belt around their waist that includes flags that hang at the player's sides and posterior. The flags must contrast with the player's pants and should, but don't have to, contrast the opposing teams' flags. Flags may **NOT** be looped around the inside of the belt before securing the belt. The flags shall be freely removable.
- No hats shall be worn.

RULE 2 – DEFINITION OF PLAYING TERMS

BLOCKING, RUSHING AND DEFLAGGING

- Blocking is legally obstructing an opponent via contact with hands or body. Blockers must be on their feet before, during and after contact is made with an opponent. A blocker is allowed to contact only that portion of the opponent's body between the waist and shoulders and the blocker's hands or forearms must be in front or to the side of the player being blocked. In any block the hands or arms may not be swinging forward faster than the blocker's body. Hands must always be in advance of the elbows and the arms must be flexed at the elbows. Players must block with hands and elbows within the frame of their body. Players are not allowed to cross their arms and thrust forward in the manner of a battering ram.
- Clipping is an illegal block occurring when the force of the initial contact is from behind an opponent. Doubtful cases involving a side block or the opponent turning his back to a blockers are to be judged by an official according to whether the opponent was able to see or ward off the blocker.
- Blocking below the waist is making illegal contact below the waist of an opponent.
- Pass rushing is the act of crossing the line of scrimmage in an attempt to interfere with a passing play and/or deflag the passer. A pass rusher must avoid charging into any Team A player. When encountering a blocker from Team A, a pass rusher must (a) stop prior to making contact with the blocker or (b) clearly change direction in an effort to move around the blocker. If a pass rusher makes an effort to move around the blocker and the blocker moves into the path of the pass rusher, there is no charging. In any case, the pass rusher may block or contact the blocker using only the techniques listed as described

above. Any Team B player may pass rush from any position on the field provided they are on the B's side of the football and outside the expanded neutral zone of when any team player that began the play outside the expanded neutral zone or when any team player that began the play outside the expanded neutral zone crosses the line of scrimmage.

- Deflagging is removing the runner's flags. Deflagging interference is when the runner slaps or obstructs the free action of an opponent's hand during a deflagging attempt. The runner's hand may not be moving faster than his body nor shall be below his waist when initial contact with an opponent is made. The runner's arm may not be rigid and straight (stiff-arm).

SNAP

- The snap shall **ALWAYS** be from the middle of the field. In an emergency, such as a pool of water on the line, the referee has the authority to move the ball to a playable spot.

HURDLING/DIVING

- Hurdling is the runner jumping so that both feet leave the ground at the same time. The runner may not hurdle to avoid being deflagged. The runner may step over an opponent who is lying prone.
- Diving is the runner jumping such that both feet leave the ground at the same time and runner does not land on his feet. The runner may not dive to avoid being deflagged.
 - NOTE: Diving to catch or deflag is legal provided normal contact rules apply. (i.e. Diving into a player to deflag the player is a personal foul)

TRIPPING

- Tripping is obstructing an opponent below the knee.

RULE 3 – PERIODS AND TIME

LENGTH OF PERIODS (HALVES)

- The game shall be played in two periods (hereinafter called "half") of 20 minutes each. The clock does not stop. **Time outs DO NOT stop the clock.**
- Games interrupted because of events beyond the control of the officials shall be continued from the point of interruption unless the teams agree to do otherwise. When weather conditions are construed to be hazardous, the officials are authorized to delay or suspend the game.
- There will be a 5-minute intermission between the halves.

RULE 4 – DEAD BALL & DEFLAGGING

DEAD BALL AND THE END OF THE DOWN

- The ball becomes dead and the down is ended when:
 - A live ball goes out of bounds;
 - The runner goes out of bounds;
 - The runner is deflagged (note: if a runner's flag falls off accidentally i.e., without any defensive contact, he is not considered down until touched by a defender);
 - Any forward pass (legal or illegal) is incomplete;

- Any loose ball is simultaneously caught by opposing players;
- The passer passes to himself;
- Any score occurs;
- A runner has less than three flags and is touched by an opponent between the shoulders and waist, including touching a runner whose three flags are not reasonably in proper position (unless misadjusted by action during a down);
- An official inadvertently sounds his whistle;
- A player that started the down without a flag belt possesses a live ball.
 - NOTE: If a player's knee touches the ground or falls down while his flags are still on, he may get up & advance the ball until he is deflagged. If the ball carrier, while still on the ground, is touched by an opposing player, the ball carrier is considered deflagged and the play will be blown dead. If the referee determines that the ball carrier is in an unsafe position, he or she may blow the play dead without an actual "touch" by an opposing player.

DEFLAGGING

- The runner is considered "tackled" when a player removes the runner's flags.
- A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag. It is best for the defensive player to attempt to grab only one flag at a time. Attempting to grab more than one flag at the same time may be considered illegal blocking if it appears that the deflagger is attempting to obstruct the forward progress of the runner.
- The runner must keep flags on each side of his body at waist level across the posterior. Flags not in proper position will cause a runner to be considered deflagged when touched. Allowances will be made for flag position shifts as a result of action that occurs during the down.
- If a runner **HAS LESS** than three flags and is touched by an opponent between the shoulder and waist, the runner is considered to be deflagged. The ball becomes dead at the spot where the ball was when the runner is touched.

RULE 5 – DOWNS

- A team in possession of the ball shall have four consecutive downs (a series) to advance to the line-to-gain. Any down may be repeated if provided for by rules (usually a penalty).
- Only ONE first down obtained by crossing "50 yard" line.
- 1st and 2nd grade groups:
 - Can be 1 or more pass and 3 runs per each set of downs (Maximum of 3 runs per set of downs)
 - If is 4th down and team has NOT thrown at least 1 pass and quarterback goes back to throw and no one is open, then quarterback still MUST pass – quarterback is NOT allowed to RUN in this scenario.
 - There is no time clock for each play but try best to be under One (1) minute
- 3rd and 4th grade groups:
 - Can be 1 or more pass and 3 runs per each set of downs (Maximum of 3 runs per set of downs)

- If it is 4th down and team has NOT thrown at least 1 pass and quarterback goes back to throw and no one is open, then quarterback still MUST pass – quarterback is NOT allowed to RUN in this scenario.
- One (1) minute time clock for each play
- 5th and 6th grade groups:
 - Can be 2 or more passes and maximum of 2 runs per each set of downs
 - Can be more than 2 passes (2 passes minimum per set of downs)
 - Cannot be more than 2 runs per set of downs (2 runs maximum per set of downs)
 - If it is 3rd or 4th down and team has NOT thrown at least 2 passes and quarterback goes back to throw and no one is open, then quarterback still MUST pass – quarterback is NOT allowed to RUN in this scenario.
 - 40 second time clock for each play

RULE 6 – SNAPPING, HANDING AND PASSING THE BALL

- No player shall encroach upon the neutral zone after the ball is declared ready-for-play and touch the ball or an opponent. After the snapper has made his final adjustment of the ball, it is encroachment for any player to break the plane of the line of scrimmage, except for the snapper’s right to be over the ball, and touch the ball or an opponent.

OFFENSE

- Must have 3 down linemen
- Down linemen cannot go out for a pass
- Maximum of 4 receivers going out for a pass
- No quarterback sneaks allowed from directly behind center snap position. Quarterback may take snap from drop back position and run around the left or right end positions.

DEFENSE

- Defensive line will line up on the ball. Referee counts to 3 before defense can rush. If there is dropped snap or fumble, defense does not have to wait for count to 3 before rushing.
- 3 second rule definition – defense must stay behind line of scrimmage until 3 second count ends before coming over.
- There will be no **NO BLITZ** anytime for 1st & 2nd and 3rd & 4th grade groups.
- 5th & 6th grade groups **MAY** have 1 blitz per 4 downs. Blitz must be called aloud by defensive team or coach as the offensive team breaks the huddle and is walking up to the line of scrimmage.
- NO BLITZ on 2 point conversion.
- Defensive backs MUST play man to man coverage. Defensive backs must “cover” a receiver. One free safety is allowed to play in the middle of the defensive backfield and cover the quarterback.

RULE 7 – SCORING PLAYS

OVERTIME

- In overtime, each team is guaranteed one possession. Each possession starts at the opponent’s 15-yard-line. Series alternate until one team has scored more points than the other.

OTHER RULES

- No punting or kicking off. Possession will start at the 5 yard line.
- After a 4th down, ball will be placed on 5 yard line to start other teams' possession.
- Players not in the game will only sit out 1 set of 4 downs at a time. Every player will sit out equally.
- If ball is intercepted or fumbled, then possession starts where player was downed or flag pulled.
- 2 point conversions will be from the 5 yard line after touchdowns.
- Mercy Rule: if team is up by 21 points, then other team gets an extra down per set of 4.
- No taunting by any player or coach will be allowed. Verbal warning on first offense and second time is immediate removal from that game and suspension of next game.
- Borrowing player – Borrowed Player Cannot play quarterback or running back.
- Score will not be kept for 1st & 2nd Grade Division. Coaches will referee their own games.
- Safety – Defensive team is awarded 2 points and then gets the ball at the other end of the field.

RULE 8 – CONDUCT OF PLAYERS AND OTHERS

HELPING THE RUNNER

- An offensive player shall not push, pull or lift the runner.

ILLEGAL USE OF HANDS AND HOLDING AND BLOCKING

- An offensive player shall not use a blocking technique
 - That is not permissible by Rule 2
 - Grasp or encircle any teammate to form interlocked interference
 - Use hands, arms or legs to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or hold in an effort to restrain opponent
- The runner may not grasp a teammate.
- The defensive player shall not use a technique which
 - Is not permissible by Rule 2
 - Use his hands, to add momentum to charge of a teammate
 - Use his hands or arms to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent
- A defensive player may not intentionally push or block a runner who is near the sideline. A defensive player shall not intentionally hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when trying to remove his flag (this includes tackling and body blocking). Grabbing for more than one flag by a defensive player may be considered illegal blocking if it appears that the deflagger is attempting to obstruct the forward progress of the runner.
- No player shall intentionally deflag a player who is not a runner before the player receives the ball.
- No player shall obstruct an opponent with an extended (non-flexed at the elbow aka stiff-arm) hand and arm.
- The runner shall not use his hands below his waist to protect his flags. While making initial contact with his opponent, the runner may not use his hands below his waist to block an opponent.
- The runner shall not hurdle or lower his head to interfere with being deflagged. A runner may not lower his head more than halfway between his waist and shoulders.

- The runner shall not dive to avoid being deflagged.
- A runner may not charge into a potential deflagger.
 - NOTE: Blocking an opponent from behind is not necessarily clipping. The intent of the clipping infraction is to protect players from an unanticipated and unsafe block from the rear. A player turning his back on an opponent or slowing down in front of an opponent to “draw” a clipping penalty will usually be unsuccessful. Additionally, blocking from the read on the initial line charge and immediately after the snap is not clipping.
- No player may block an opponent below the waist.
- No player may trip an opponent.
- The center must be given ample opportunity, before being blocked, to regain his balance after snapping the ball.

ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT

- No player shall commit a flagrant foul. These include: striking an opponent with a fist, locked hand, forearm, elbow, knee or foot or wearing any illegal equipment that is unsafe to opponents.
 - NOTE: Fighting causes all fighters to be ejected regardless of who started the fight.
- No player shall physically or verbally afflict an official. When in question, the act is considered a flagrant harrying or intimidation.
 - NOTE: Any single flagrant foul results in mandatory disqualification. A team may forfeit a game if it allows a disqualified player to become a player. Ejected players must leave the playing area.
- No player shall position himself on the shoulders of a teammate to gain an advantage; hide the ball under a jersey; tackle a runner; charge in to an opponent or make any other contact, physical or verbal, that an official determines is unnecessary and incites roughness. The runner shall not deliberately run in to a defensive player.
 - NOTE: At the official’s discretion, a player may be ejected for 4 to 8 downs for those acts considered major but not flagrant.
- Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer who has thrown or is throwing a legal forward pass or a passer who is fading back or standing still because he is considered out of play after the pass. A defensive player may not forcible contact the passer’s arm above the elbow (from the elbow to the shoulder). If the quarterback’s arm is hit below the elbow, it is up to the official whether it is roughing the passer, or if the defender was simply attempting to legally make a play on the ball.
- Fighting with another player requires:
 - Disqualification from the current game
 - Disqualification from the team’s next scheduled game
 - Possible current and future disqualification, to be determined by the HTPD Staff.
- Misconduct towards an official requires:
 - Disqualification from the current game
 - Disqualification from the team’s next scheduled game
- Striking an official requires:
 - Current disqualification

- Possible future disqualification, to be determined by the HTPD Staff.

NON-CONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY PLAYERS

- No player may act in an unsportsmanlike manner during the game or intermission. Examples include:
 - Abusive or insulting language or gestures
 - Using disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with A's signal or movements
 - Intentionally kicking at any player or the ball or intentionally swinging an arm or fist at any player
 - Leaving the field between plays or using a "hide out play" by placing a player or players near the sideline to gain an advantage unless replaced or unless with the permission of the referee
 - Failing to place the ball, after it becomes dead, on the ground or immediately return it to a nearby official
 - Spiking the ball or throwing the ball in the air or from the field of play
 - Attempting to substitute a suspended player
 - Taunting an opponent
- A second unsportsmanlike conduct foul within a 10-yard penalty results in disqualification.

NON-CONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY NON-PLAYERS

- No coach, substitute, trainer or other team attendant shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner during the game or intermission. Examples are:
 - Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures
 - Attempting to influence or indicating an objection to a decision of an official
 - Disrespectfully addressing an official
 - Failing to be ready to start either half
 - Be on the field except as a substitute or replaced player
 - Abusively or intentionally harassing an opponent

RULE 9 – PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

- If a foul occurs during a down, the basic enforcement spot is fixed by the type of play. There are two types of play: loose ball play and running play. Loose ball play is action during a legal forward pass; a backward pass or fumble made by A from on or behind its scrimmage line. A loose ball also includes the run or runs which precede such a legal forward pass or fumble. A running play is any action not included in loose ball play.
- If a foul occurs during loose ball play, the basic enforcement spot is the previous spot.
- If a foul occurs during a running play, the basic enforcement spot is the spot where the related run ends. The run ends where the player loses possession if his run is followed by a fumble or pass. If the runner does not lose possession, his run ends where the ball becomes dead.
- 5 yards and new first down for pass interference
- 5 yards for holding
- 5 yards for off sides
- 5 yards from original spot for guarding of flags

- If parent comes on field for any reason, game will end. If this happens a second time, then child will be removed from team and will forfeit their right to a refund of the fee.
- We will be using teenagers, HTPD Staff and/or parents/coaches to referee. We will have ZERO tolerance to arguing. Coach will be removed from the game and not allowed to coach next game.