



**ESTABLISHED SEPTEMBER 26, 2002**

## **8 Man Adult Flag Football Rules**

*Revised 02/27/2012*

You are playing in a recreational to very competitive FLAG football league, not a tackle league. Player safety and player conduct is the highest concern of the GSA staff and its GSA officials and it will not be taken lightly. By definition you are playing in a situation that is difficult to officiate and difficult to devise rules for. As a player you must realize this and the one thing you can control is your sportsmanship and your team's sportsmanship. You cannot, as a player, do something that is unsportsmanlike. This even includes legal activities; for example, a hard block with 7 seconds to go in a 30 point win to a player who is caught off guard is completely legal but unsportsmanlike and would be grounds for ejection. Any unsportsmanlike conduct on or off the field of play can be an ejection even if the referees do not catch the play (GSA Staff, or videotape).

**RULES:** This is a flag football specific rule book giving exemptions to regular football rules. If a football rule is not in this rule book then the league falls back on the National Federation High School rule book.

**EJECTIONS AND SUSPENSIONS:** The league will *suspend* based on best information obtained from referees and GSAL staff. An ejection is not a suspension. Ejections are made by field officials and suspensions are made by the league office. The league will penalize the instigator typically as harsh as or harsher than the retaliator. The league will simply do it's best to make the best judgment. All suspensions can be appealed. The league may suspend a player or team based off an accumulation of things the league deems as a pattern of misconduct. The league will use their best judgment in the suspension of players to maintain a safe and friendly environment. Any player that leaves the sideline during a fight will be ejected from the game. Any team leaving a team's sideline will be ejected as a team and not individuals. Acts outside the field of play may also be deemed as acts that require suspensions at any time throughout league play and anywhere on the park premises.

**PLAYING FIELD:** The playing field will be regulation size football field (53 ½ x 100). First down markers are positioned in set locations approximately every 20 yards (20, 40, 40, and 20).

**EQUIPMENT:** Each team will be responsible to provide their own football for the game. The ball must be regulation size football, ex. NCAA or Pro Type Ball. Each team will be responsible to provide a triple flag belt for each player on their team. This is 3 flags attached to nylon belt that has a quick release belt clip. All belts must have flags at least 12 inches in length or more. Players using flag belts shorter than 12 inches will be subject to a penalty or ejection for unsportsmanlike conduct. All players (offense or defense) must start every play with their flag belt on or the player is subject to a delay of game penalty. In order to challenge a player's flag length you must provide the tool used to measure that length. If you challenge a length of a flag and it turns out to be a correct length you will lose a timeout, and be charged a delay of game penalty. You may not challenge the length of a flag in the last two minutes of the second half.

**UNIFORMS:** All teams must have like colored matching uniforms with every player having a unique number for themselves by the end of Week 3. If players are not in uniform by week 3 then that player will not be allowed to play. Shirts with drawn on numbers will not be accepted as a jersey. Cleats- only molded or rubber screw in cleats or any flat soled shoes are allowed. No metal or metal tipped cleats allowed. You will be ejected from the game for wearing those types of cleats.

**ROSTERS & WAIVERS:** Every player is required to sign a waiver before they play in the league. You are only permitted to play on 1 team per season; NO exceptions. If you start playing and are on the roster for 1 team at the beginning of the season, you have till Week 3 if you are not satisfied with being on that team to switch teams. In order to switch teams you have to have a mutual agreement between the old team's coach and the new team's coach that you are switching teams. Rosters and waivers are to be completed and turned in Week 1 of the season. A final roster needs to be finalized and edited through the league commissioner by the end of Week 3. You may only have a total of 21 players on the roster. If a team is found to have more than 21 players participating in a game the team will be subject to forfeiture of that game.

**LENGTH OF THE GAME:** Playing time will be 40 minutes in duration divided into two 20 minute periods, with a 2 minute half-time intermission. There is a 25 second play clock that runs in between plays. You will get (three) 30 second timeouts each half. The referees on the field have the ability of calling an Official's Time out at their discretion. The clock will run continuously for the first half, and the clock will only stop at the 2 minute warning in the second half, unless stopped by a timeout prior. In the second half after the two minute warning the clock will stop for the following: Touchdown, Incomplete pass, PAT, Out of Bounds, Time-outs, and/or penalty administration under the 2 minute warning. In the event of overtime, each team will get (one) 30 second timeout. Timeouts do not carry over from regulation.

**COIN TOSS:** At the coin toss in the center of the field, the visiting Team Captain will be given the privilege of calling the coin toss prior to flip. The winner of the toss will be given his choice of defense, offense, designating the end of the field at which the ball will be put in play, or may defer his choice to the second half. The loser will have his choice of the remaining options.

**FORFEITED GAMES:** If your team fails to show up within 5 minutes of your game time, the game may be declared as a forfeit (At the discretion of an GSA league commissioner). The non-forfeited team will be required to pay their referee fees for that week and will be awarded a 7-0 victory. If a team forfeits twice in a season, they will be removed from the schedule with no refunds. If they wish to return the following season they will be required to pay the entire season's referee fees up front.

**MERCY RULE:** There is a no mercy enforced. Everyone has paid to play and points do make a difference for postseason. However, there is an unsportsmanlike rule in effect and it is considered by the league office that if you show no mercy when a team is way down then you are being unsportsmanlike and could be rendered a 7-0 loss for the team ejection. You can still destroy a team with class!

## **OFFENSE**

**EIGHT MAN ELIGIBLE:** All 8 players, **including the linemen**, are eligible to run down field and catch passes. Receivers can all line up on one side, there does not have to be a balanced wide receiver set. There is no intentional grounding, because everyone is eligible.

**BALL PLACEMENT:** The team that is receiving the ball at the start of the game or after any touchdown will start the ball at the 30 yard line. Touchbacks also start at the 30 yard line. There are **NO KICKOFFS** to start play. Line of scrimmage will be where the ball is, when the flag is pulled, not where the flag is pulled. After each play the White Hat Referee will place a marker to spot the new line of scrimmage. The ball can remain in the team's hands at huddle.

**LINE OF SCRIMMAGE:** Offensive team must have at least **four (4) players** on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap. If the offense fails to have four players on the line at the start of the play, an illegal formation penalty will be called; 5 yards.

**MOTION:** Only **ONE PLAYER** can be in motion at the snap of the ball and must be running parallel to the line of scrimmage. Please note that more than one player can initially shift, however all players must be set for one second before the player goes in motion. All eight players are eligible so the linemen may go in motion.

**CHARGING:** All offensive players once receiving the ball must make an attempt to avoid contact with the defense. An offensive player may not lower their shoulder, or attempts to bull through a defensive player. A ball carrier may spin or juke, but must realize that while spinning or juking he is in a "State of Non-Control" and should contact occur as a result of his uncontrolled momentum, the defensive player may not be penalized. Two players to one spot at same time will not result in a penalty. The ball carrier may jump over a player on the ground. Players can jump forward to advance the ball so long as the player does not create contact with the opponent.

**JUMPING:** Jumping to advance the ball is allowed. In order to jump and advance the ball legally the ball carrier must be able to land in control on his own feet. If a ball carrier jumps and falls and or initiates contact into the defense by jumping it will be considered a flag guarding penalty. (10 yards and loss of down) There is no diving. An offensive player cannot jump through the offensive line of scrimmage on a goal line play.

**OPEN HAND BLOCKING** - During a legal block, contact can be made with **OPEN**

**HANDS ONLY.** Open hands can be thrust forward initially to contact an opponent inside their body frame. Hands cannot be thrust forward above the shoulders to contact an opponent on the neck, face, or head. As the play develops, a blocker is permitted to work for and maintain position on an opponent as long as they do not push from behind or clip. Open hand blocking is allowed on all portions of the field and is not restricted to the line of scrimmage. Two on one blocking is allowed. A player may not initiate their block with anything other than an open hand block, i.e. dipping their shoulder to block is not permitted. If a player is found to have initiated contact with anything other than an open hand block is subject to an unsportsmanlike

penalty and suspension by the league. Suspensions may be enforced if seen by league officials even if the game officials didn't call a penalty.

**FORWARD PASSES:** The offensive team is only allowed one forward pass behind the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is advanced beyond the line of scrimmage the ball is no longer eligible to be passed forward, regardless if the ball is brought back behind the line of scrimmage.

**FLAG GUARDING:** Flag guarding is defined as any attempt by the ball carrier to shield his flags from being pulled. This includes but is not limited to, swinging free hand, pushing an opponent's hand away, stiff arming, holding flags with free hand, lowering or dipping their shoulder, and using the ball to shield the flag. Flag guarding is a 10-yard penalty from the point of infraction and loss of down. Tying of the flags is considered unsportsmanlike conduct. 15 yard penalty, ejection, and loss of down.

**ILLEGAL PARTICIPATION:** A player must start every play with a flag belt on regardless of offense or defense. If a play starts without a flag the play will be blown dead. If a play is finished and the illegal participation is noticed then there is no penalty.

**DECEPTION PLAYS:** The ball must be lined up at least 9 yards from the sideline prior to any play. Anytime a player or team tries to hide the ball from the opposite team or referees will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for 15yards.

**DELAY OF GAME:** If the offensive team does not snap the ball before the 25 second play clock expires they will be charged a delay of game penalty of 5 yards. If the ball is snapped without the offensive player wearing flags a delay of game penalty will be charged to the offensive team. If any team stops the flow of the game for any reason, example would be a defensive player asking an official to check the length of an opposing team's flag, and the flag is of correct length a delay of game penalty will be called.

**DEAD BALL:** A ball carrier that falls to the ground is considered down and will not be allowed to get back up to play. In the event a ball carrier inadvertently loses their flag belt during play the defender will need to tag him with a ONE handed touch. There are no fumbles. When the ball carriers loses control of the ball and it touches the ground the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the point it touched the ground as long as the spot is at or behind the ball carriers forward progress. "Crowd Rule" no longer applies, attempts on flag belts are judgment calls by the game officials, therefore if an official doesn't think an attempt was made on a flag and the flag falls off it is the responsibility of the defensive team to ONE HAND touch the offensive player, so if you feel you made an attempt on the flag and the belt falls off but you do not hear the whistle you then must touch the offensive player. A player who is overly aggressive in their one-hand touch may be subject to an unsportsmanlike penalty and may be subject to suspension by the league.

**PUNTING:** The offensive team is allowed to punt the ball to better their field position. The punt is a protected kick meaning that there is no rush. The referee will ask the offense to declare a punt. The offense may not change their mind on the declared punt unless they use a timeout. No direct snap is allowed. The punter must be at least five (5) yards behind the line of scrimmage when receiving the snap. After receiving the snap, the punter must kick the ball immediately and in one continuous motion. Both offense and defense are required to have 4 players on the line of scrimmage prior to the snap of the ball. Once snapped the defense may leave the line of scrimmage. The ball may not hit the ground before it reaches the punter, should the ball at any time go behind the punter or be snapped short of the punter it will be ruled dead at the spot the

ball hits the ground. Punting team must give a 2-yard halo around a player attempting to catch the ball. If the ball hits the ground after the receiving team touches it, the ball is dead. A ball does not have to be caught to be advanced. It can be picked up off the ground from a punt. The offensive team has 10 seconds to declare whether they will punt or run a "live ball" play after the referee blows the whistle to set the ball. From that 10-second limit, the offense will have a remainder of 15 seconds to complete their play (i.e. the whole play still falls within the 25-second play clock).

**FAKE PUNT:** There are two ways to perform a fake punt. The first is to pooch punt to an offensive player that must be standing **behind the line of scrimmage**, and then the ball can be advanced only by running it through the line of scrimmage. The second way is to pooch punt the ball backwards behind the punter and the receiving offensive player can elect to run or pass through the line of scrimmage. A pooch punt may not be received by the punter. The play becomes "live" as soon as a punter kicks the ball. This means the defense can rush the punter **AFTER** the ball is kicked.

## **DEFENSE**

**TACKLING:** A legal tackle is defined as pulling OFF the ball carrier's flag belt, without impeding his forward movement. Incidental contact does not constitute a penalty against the offense or defense. Tackling a ball carrier is illegal, as is aggressively shoving or pushing the ball carrier to the ground or out of bounds. If a player is attempting to pull a flag per judgment of the field officials they will not be called for aggressive body contact. It is a judgment call by the officials so use your good judgment.

**RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK:** Full rush and blitzing is allowed on every down except for punts. The open hand blocking rule is in effect for a defensive rusher. Any head down or elbow first is illegal. Any swim or under hooking is also illegal. A good rule of thumb for a rusher is to never bring their arms above his own shoulders. The defense may not make contact with the center until the center raises his head. The center must make a reasonable attempt to defend himself once the ball is snapped and may not bait an illegal touch by the defense.

**BUMP & RUN:** 1(one) bump is legal for the first 5 yards. You may not ride an offensive player off the line.

## **SCORING**

**TOUCHDOWNS= 6 points**

**FIELD GOALS= 3 points**

**POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN ATTEMPTS= 1 point** (from the 5-yard line) **or= 2 points** (from the 10-yard line)- You may run, or pass for an extra point attempt. If you attempt to pass for the extra point and your pass is intercepted, the ball may be returned for 2 point conversion. The defending team will be awarded two points for a returned extra point regardless if the offense tries a 1 point play.

**SAFETY= 2 points.** After a safety the ball will be punted from the 30 yard line to the receiving team. Punt rules apply.

**FIELD GOALS / PAT KICK:** The defense will NOT rush between the Guard-Center gaps on either side. The Center and Guards will be a maximum of one (1) yard apart from each other. The defense must place four players on each side of the ball. Rushing the A gap is a 10 yard penalty live ball foul.

**FAKE FIELD GOALS / PAT KICK:** In the event of a fake field goal, the place holder cannot have either knee on the ground prior to the snap. The ball may be directly snapped to the kicker.

**ON-SIDE PAT=2 points (from 30 yard line) and the ball back at own 30 yard line-** Since there is no kickoffs, you can attempt what is considered an on-side kick. Under 2 minutes in the 2nd half, any team can attempt an On-Side PAT if they are down by any number of points. This means attempting a 2 point conversion from the 30 yard line running or passing. If conversion is good the team that attempted the On-Side PAT is awarded 2 points for the conversion and the ball at their own 30 yard line. You can only attempt the On-Side PAT if you are trailing in points.

**OVERTIME:** There will be a coin flip with the visitor calling the toss. The winner will be able to choose offense or defense first. If the captain, who wins the coin toss, chooses offense first, they will have a choice of going for a 1 point from the 5 yard line or 2 point play from the 10 yard line. **NO KICKING IN OVERTIME!** With the captain who loses coin toss the same option when they are on offense. If there is a tie at the end of the 2 possessions, then they will continue the format in the alternating order (Team who was offense in 1st overtime will be starting on defense in the 2nd overtime) until there is a winner. Each team gets 1(one) timeout. Timeouts do not carry over from regulation.

#### **OFFENSIVE & DEFENSIVE PENALTIES**

**ENCROACHMENT/OFFSIDE/FALSE START:** A false movement of the football by the center shall constitute a false start. This is a dead ball foul and the play shall be immediately whistled dead before play begins and 5 yards automatically marked off against the team. A lineman will be considered offside when he/she breaks the neutral zone prior to the snap, even if there is no contact made with the opponent. If a player on either side lines up offside, the official will point toward that player's team side. It is the player's responsibility to look at the referee. If that player does not get back on side before the ball is snapped, he will be considered as having been offside at the moment of the snap. This will be a 5-yard penalty.

**ROUGHING THE PASSER –** This is when the defender makes contact with the quarterback in a manner that is aggressive or that is not deemed an attempt to go after the flag belt. This includes when a defender tries to deflect the pass and makes contact with the quarterback's arm or hand. There may be NO contact with the QB above the stomach and below the knees. 15 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and an automatic first down. If the pass is completed, then the penalty will be assessed from the end of the play. If a defender is only attempting for the flags with no hands up there can be no penalty. There is a two yard halo around the quarterback in which if a defender has one or more hands up and there is contact made in any way then the defender will be called for roughing the passer. Hint: Once near the quarterback only go for his flags.

**HOLDING:** This occurs when a player grabs the clothing of another player from the opposing team. This includes when the defender is attempting to pull a flag and misses and grabs the ball carrier's shorts or shirt. 10 yard penalty from the spot of the foul or end of the play for offensive holding. 5 yard penalty at the end of the play for defensive holding. If the ball carrier is held by the last defender inside the opposing 20 yard line then the ball carrier will be awarded a touchdown.

**PASS INTERFERENCE:** After the pass is in the air, neither passing receiver nor defender may touch the other until one of them touches the ball, or else offensive or defensive pass interference may be called. Screening a receiver's eyes by a defender without playing the football is pass interference and shall be penalized as such.

\* All offensive pass interference calls which are accepted by the defensive captain shall be marked off 10 yards from L.O.S. with loss of down. \* All defensive pass interference calls which are accepted by the offensive captain will be 15 yards and an automatic first down. This penalty is not a spot foul.

**DIVING:** At no time may a ball carrier dive forward to advance the ball. Diving will be at the sole discretion of the Referee. A 10-yard penalty will be applied and loss of down- -same as flag guarding.

**INADVERTENT WHISTLE:** If the official whistles the play dead prematurely, the offense has the option to take the result of the play where the ball is when the **Inadvertent whistle** occurred, unless possession changes prior to the whistle and then the ball will be spotted where the ball was at the time of the whistle.

**PROTEST PROCEDURES:** Any protests for misinterpretation or application of playing rules must be settled on the spot before the next play. This is called a “**Rules Challenge**”. The captain **must have a copy of the rules in order to validate his protest**. Otherwise, "Delay of Game" will be called. If coach is wrong in the protest there will be a loss of a time-out, if no time-outs remain a 5-yard penalty will be assessed. Remember only the captain, may confer with the officials. **Judgment calls are not “Rules Challenge” eligible**. League Commissioners may assist in the “rules challenge”.

**PERSONAL FOULS AND PROHIBITED ACTS:**\* No player will commit a personal foul during a period or an intermission. Whenever, in the judgment of any game official, and GSA League official, the following acts are deliberate or flagrant, the players involved will be ejected from the game and possibly suspended.

- \* Contact with an opponent who is on the ground throwing the runner to the ground pushing out of bounds.
- \* Unnecessary roughness of any nature.
- \* The ball carrier deliberately driving or running into a defensive player.
- \* The defensive player deliberately driving or running into the ball carrier.
- \* Touching the center before he has begun his pass pattern or stood up to block.
- \* Abusive or insulting language.
- \* Any acts of unfair play Managers, Coaches, or others on the field of play at any time.
- \*The punter delaying the kick.
- \* Attempting to substitute a suspended player and forfeiture of the game.
- \* Intentionally pulling or removing the flags from a player without the ball, the player will be penalized at the spot of the foul.
- \* Roughing the kicker, passer, or center.
- \* Using locked hands, elbows, or any part of the forearm or hand, blocking in manner inconsistent with the rules.
- \* Tackling the ball carrier as in tackle football.

\* A player found to have played a down with flag belts not of regulation size.

\* Penalty for above infractions: 15 yards and an automatic first down if the defense is called for an above infraction. If flagrant, the offender may be ejected and suspended.

**EJECTIONS & SUSPENSIONS:** These offenses can get you suspended from the league (suspension time may vary).

\* Fighting.

\* Any other flagrant, deliberate, or violent act.

\* The threatening or violent act toward a referee or GSA Official.

\* Threatening of any individual with threat of a gun.

\* Kicking the opposite team's ball out of the field of play.

\* Any act that any LVSL official deems not in the best interest of the league.

\* Players leaving the sideline to the field of play other than during the intermission at halftime.

\* Interfering with a player or any play while the ball is live.

**FOULS BY BOTH TEAMS:**

If offsetting fouls occur during a down, that down will be repeated. Exception: if each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul was not prior to the final change of possession and it declined the penalty of its opponents foul. When a live ball foul, is followed by a dead ball foul by the opponent, the penalties administered separately and in the order of occurrence.

**TEAM PLACEMENT:** Any team winning the championship must be moved up to the next league for at least 1 season. GSA staff has the ability to place teams in accordance with competition. If your team does not win the championship, but loses 2 games during the regular season or goes to 2 to 3 straight championships, then you will be moved up a league.

**NO REFUND POLICY**

There are **NO REFUNDS** for the **LEAGUE FEES OR REF FEES** at any time what so ever.