

SWFINEST NFL FLAG RULEBOOK



SWFINEST NFL FLAG FOOTBALL RULES - Version 2.0.1

Rules will be custom for this league and will include a few NEW rules to enhance the game and to closely resemble the rules of professional flag football and to stay current with this growing sport!

**Inaugural season age divisions may be altered to 7u, 10u, 13u, 17u TBD by registrations. Apply age differences based on majority age group, i.e only 7u coaches can be on field.*

ROSTERS

- Only players on an officially approved SWFINEST NFL FLAG roster may participate, with Age Verification.
- SWFINEST NFL FLAG is 5-on-5 Competitive Youth Flag Football League.
- Teams are composed of a minimum of 5 players and a maximum of 11. Any more than 11 players require the approval of the league commissioner and the coach. There are 5 players per team on the playing field at one time.
- SWFINEST NFL FLAG will have authority to move/alter teams. Players are placed on teams based on proximity to nearest team with available space or by coaching requests.
- In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field, but no fewer than four. Teams must start a game with a minimum of four players.
- The opposing team is not required to “adjust down” when a team cannot field the required number of players but may do so to show sportsmanship.
- If a team “borrows” a player(s) from another team to give them the required number of players, the game will be recorded as a forfeit and the game may be played.
- SWFINEST NFL FLAG Age Divisions are as Follows: 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U & 16U (16U with cover 15-17 years of age)

TEAM EQUIPMENT

- Footballs: The game ball will be provided by EACH TEAM for every game. Each team is allowed to use the ball they provided for OFFENSE. The provided football MUST adhere to the size requirements listed below.
 - 6U & 8U Divisions will use the Pee-Wee size football.
 - 10U Division will use the Junior size football.

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- 12U & 14U Divisions will use the Junior or Youth size football. (Either size will be accepted)
- 16U Division will use the Collegiate or Official size football.
- If you have any questions, please contact a League Commissioner.

GAME ATTIRE

- SWFINEST NFL FLAG provides each player with an NFL team jersey, NFL Flag pocket-less shorts and a set of NFL flags.
- NFL Team Jersey must be worn during the game (unless alternate jersey Approved by League Commissioner).
- During the game the HOME team will wear the dark side of the jerseys and the AWAY teams wear the light side of the jerseys. If using the NFL FLAG New Sublimated Jerseys, League Administrators will make the Adjustment. Jerseys must be tucked into the shorts/pants.
- No pockets allowed on shorts. This is to prevent injuries.
- The flag belts must be securely placed on each player's hips. They must be secure enough to stay in place during game play and must remain on each side of the player.
- Players are not allowed to wear the same color shorts as their flags or have stripes on their shorts. (Approved options for shorts must be approved by the League Commissioner)
- Flag belts must not have slack hanging down after adjusting the size. These must be cut and taped. Please refer to League Commissioner on the proper procedure.
- Players are NOT allowed to cut their flags any shorter. (If a child is short enough that the flags are dragging, please contact the League Commissioner to discuss options).
- Players must wear cleats and they must be rubber soled. NO METAL SPIKES allowed. (High ankle cleats are recommended to avoid ankle injury).
- Coaches Game Attire – SWFINEST NFL FLAG will provide league shirts to Coaches, but coaches are welcome to wear any appropriate attire (No Drug references, Foul Language, etc.). We recommend coaches wear their team colors.

COACHES

- Coaches will be volunteers (parents, grandparents, family members, etc.) who are willing to help players understand and enjoy the game.
- Coaches will be responsible for helping to shape the futures of these young athletes by giving them the opportunity to develop their self-confidence, camaraderie as teammates, improve their athletic skills, gain leadership abilities and to become more responsible for themselves and their team.
- Coaches will be responsible for team practices and games. Coaches will be allowed to have as many practices as they desire, but please be understanding of peoples' schedules

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and accommodate the parents and children involved with your team. For example: if you elect to have up to 4 practices a week you may risk a lack of returning participants the following season. It may be difficult for most individuals to commit to such a large practice schedule.

- SWFINEST NFL FLAG will only allow qualified individuals to coach. Coaches must be qualified but do not need any experience coaching. To qualify you will be required to pass a background check (active for 2 years). You will also be required to complete an online course to receive your concussion training and certification (Valid if you coach with SWFINEST NFL FLAG).
- Coaches shall be well organized for games and practices. This will ensure a high-quality experience for each participant in this league.
- Coaches will have a clear understanding that this is a competitive league.
- Coaches will have a clear understanding that despite this being a competitive league, you may have players with a wide variety of skill and knowledge of the game. As a coach, it is your responsibility to teach and instruct each child no matter their skill level and experience with flag football. Be patient and ensure you give every child the opportunity to learn and enjoy the sport. Provide each participant an opportunity to participate and contribute to the team. (Please contact the League Commissioner to discuss any issues or concerns).
- Coaches will have a clear understanding that you are a role model for these children and your actions and words must reflect this. This includes practices, games, and all team related activities. Please lead by example and show respect to all players, officials, scorekeepers, coaches, SWFINEST NFL FLAG staff, parents, spectators, and anyone else involved with this league.
- Coaches will have a clear understanding of sportsmanship. You should be a positive role model and teach your players how to win humbly and lose graciously.
- Coaches should encourage parent involvement and coordinate their assistance with your coaching style and coaching goals.
- Coaches will be required to provide a safe and enjoyable experience for all players, assistants, and parents.
- Coaches will be allowed on the field to coach **ONLY 6U and 8U Divisions** (only one coach will be allowed on the field at a time).
 - Coaches are not allowed to verbally or physically direct their player once the ball is in play (After the hike).
 - Coaches must be 7 yards back when the play begins and must be out of the way of the play or an impeding penalty will be called.
- Coaches in the 10U, 12U, 14U and 16U divisions are NOT allowed on the field.
- Coaches will be required to sign a **CODE OF CONDUCT** with SWFINEST NFL FLAG. This code of conduct will include parents, assistants, and spectators. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure everyone involved with his team meets these standards. If any coach, assistant, or parent is unable to adhere to this code of conduct, SWFINEST NFL FLAG reserves the right to disqualify and remove them from the league.
- Coaching code of conduct applies to assistant coaches and fans. (Assistant coaches are not mandatory and are selected by the head coach.)

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- COACHES ARE REQUIRED TO FOLLOW ALL OF SWFINEST NFL FLAG RULES AND GUIDELINES. ANY POLICY OR CODE OF CONDUCT ISSUES MAY RESULT IN DISQUALIFICATION FROM COACHING WITH SWFINEST NFL FLAG.
- Once the game has started the game official(s) assigned to that game have complete authority over the game. As a coach, whether you agree with the judgement calls of the officials during the game or not, there will be no review process. All questions and/or concerns regarding the game official's judgement during a game should be directed to the designated referee ambassador(s) and/or head game official at the field. During a game if a coach wishes to discuss a judgment call, he or she will be charged a timeout if the discussion impedes the progress of the game.
- SWFINEST NFL FLAG is a competitive league, but we are not at the collegiate or professional level! As a coach you are a role model and should behave accordingly. SWFINEST NFL FLAG will not tolerate coaches who behave in a negative or abusive manner. SWFINEST NFL FLAG reserves the right to suspend or fine any coach who does not abide by our code of conduct and league expectations. SWFINEST NFL FLAG code of conduct fines start at \$50 and SWFINEST NFL FLAG reserves the right to suspend or remove any coach from the league, at any time, without reimbursement.

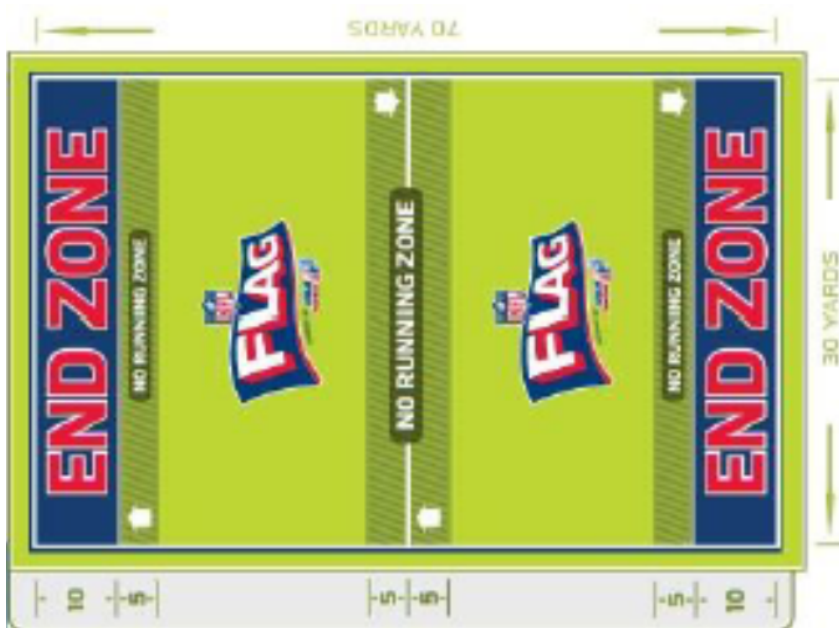
COACHES COMMISSION

- The league will create a Coaches' Commission for every season. The Commission will consist of 5 to 7 coaches (volunteers) across multiple age groups and be represented by the Coaches' Chairman. The purpose of the Commission will be to hold up the quality and integrity of the league from the coaches' perspective and present issues to the League Commissioner. All league wide players, officials, parents, or coaches' discipline regarding egregiously breaking league rules will be decided by the Coaches' Commission by a vote and presented to the League Commissioner for implementation.
- The Commission will also decide on any rule changes that are proposed by any peer within the entire league. A 60% majority vote must be decided on for any rule changes or discipline to be upheld.
- To propose a rule change, a coach must submit written request to the Commission and a meeting will be set up to discuss why the proposal is being made and the formal wording of the rule change before a vote is taken place. The Coaches' Chairman will ultimately decide if proposals are reasonable enough to be sent to the board for vote. When a 60% majority vote to change a rule or suspension is met the Coaches' Chairman will present the rule change to the League Commissioner, who will then be given the option of proposing an amendment to disciplinary actions or rule changes but will not have veto power.
- The Coaches' Chairman will decide if the amendment should be presented to the Commission for a revote or implemented into rule. The purpose of the Commission is to deal with egregious issues impacting the quality of league play and not minor issues expected within the reasonable realm of team sport league play.

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THE FIELD

- The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones (for the 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U & 16U Divisions) and a midfield first down line.
- No-Run Zones precede both the first down line and end zone line by 5 yards. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. A run of less than 5 yards is not a challenge and almost inevitable to be completed.
- In the No-Run Zones, teams cannot run the ball no matter what. All plays must be pass plays, but you are allowed to handoff behind the Line of Scrimmage. While in the No-Run-Zone, a run is not allowed even if they are being blitzed by the opposing team.
 - The only exception is in the 6U division. For this division, the No-Run-Zones do not exist.



INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

- SWFINEST NFL FLAG monitors weather conditions prior to, and during all games. For weather conditions occurring prior to game times, we will notify everyone as soon as a decision has been made to play, postpone and/or cancel games. For weather that causes field conditions to deteriorate or is forecast to create a weather-related danger, the decision to postpone or cancel games will be made at/or before 7:00 AM on Saturday game days. Each coach has the responsibility to notify their players and parents.
- In the event of severe weather conditions, the SWFINEST NFL FLAG has a league lightning safety plan. SWFINEST NFL FLAG plan will be in place to provide a safe environment for all games and league activities. The League Commissioner will monitor the lightning and if lightning is seen or thunder is heard we will immediately inform all

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coaches and officials. When a storm is approaching, and lightning is within 8 miles away, all activities will be rescheduled and may be cancelled.

- SWFINEST NFL FLAG's Inclement Weather Policy is as follows; (this includes all practices): If a storm is approaching and lightning is present, all coaches and officials will be notified. At this point the game will continue but weather will be closely monitored.
 - If lightning is present and within 5 miles, SWFINEST NFL FLAG with postpone all games by 30 min. After 30 min weather conditions will be assessed. If lightning is further than 8 miles, gameplay can continue. If lightning is still within 8 miles, games that are post-halftime will be called as is, and games pre-halftime will be cancelled and rescheduled.
 - Playoffs & Championship games may continue to be delayed ensuring games have every opportunity to continue. Games will not be as is and must be continued where they left off in the case of being rescheduled.
 - SWFINEST NFL FLAG reserves the right to use an emergency management system to facilitate the enforcement of this policy.

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

- All players must be registered with SWFINEST NFL FLAG before participating in any league or team activities. This includes the completion of the registration process, payment process, plus complete parent, and player contact information.
- A player's age must fall within the specified age range for their division. Their age on/or before the age cutoff date will determine their division. The age cut off is as follows:
 - Spring, Summer, Fall & Winter – March 1st (Except for Spring 2022 Season which will use the August 1st cut off)
- Age verification: SWFINEST NFL FLAG is a Competitive League, so age verification is required. Age verification is done by the League Commissioner verifying the players birth certificate or alternative forms of age verification. Please contact the League Commissioner if you have any questions or concerns regarding the age verification process.
- Co-ed Age Divisions are 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U and 16U (15-17). All Girls Teams Divisions: Same as Co-ed Age Division (If enough teams to staff this division).
- A player can play up out of their age division, but they will not be allowed to play down out of their age division for that season.
- No coach, parent or player can add, change, or transfer a player on any team once the rosters have been set. Exceptions can be made with the approval from the League Commissioner. Any unauthorized changes may result in player disqualification. Please contact the League Commissioner if there are any special circumstances that may warrant adjusting your roster.
- Any team playing with an unregistered player will result in an immediate game forfeiture and potential league suspension for the player and coach.

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GAME

- At the beginning of each game the officials will inspect the uniforms and equipment of each player. A legal uniform consists of the following:
 - Jersey – All players must wear matching jerseys during the game. It is the responsibility of each player to make sure that their jersey always stays tucked in. All players must wear their team jersey as an outer garment. If a player does not have a team jersey with him it is permissible, at staff's discretion, to wear a street shirt.
 - Shorts/Pants – Only shorts/pants with NO POCKETS are allowed. Also shorts/pants with belt loops, zippers, or exposed draw strings are not allowed.
 - Flag Belts – NFL flag belts and flags must be worn by all Players. It is the responsibility of each player to make sure that their flags are on their hips and pointing out prior to each play. Players must wear flag belts provided by SWFINEST NFL FLAG. Altered or tampered flags could result in an ejection or forfeiture.
 - Mouthpiece – Each player must be properly wearing a mouthpiece while on the field.
 - Cleats – Each player must have cleats. Metal spikes are NOT allowed.
 - Jewelry – Jewelry that might endanger players must be removed before play or taped to the body.
 - Eye Protection – Players may wear eye protection, to include prescription glasses or flexible sunglasses. Players may wear a face shield molded to the face with no protrusions to protect against facial injury.
 - Head Protection – Soft-shelled helmets are OPTIONAL in the competitive flag level but are not required to compete.
 - Gloves – Any player may wear gloves during the game. No sticky-aid is allowed. (Sole discretion of officials).
- Failure to comply is a safety violation, not a foul/penalty. Coaches, officials, and players share responsibility for safety.
- After the equipment has been checked, the team captains and coaches will meet at midfield for the coin toss. Coaches or team captains are required to bring their game balls to the coin toss for inspection.
- Game officials will confirm with team coaches during the coin toss that the teams are prepared to play in a sportsmanlike manner and are properly and legally equipped.
- Game officials will issue a warning about unsportsmanlike conduct, excessive rough play, etc., during the coin toss.
- First possession is decided using a coin toss. The AWAY team will make the call. If no team is designated “AWAY” the official will decide who calls the toss.
- The head official will ask the “calling captain” his choice of “heads” or “tails”. The official will ask the opposing team to repeat and confirm the choice before flipping the coin. The head official will then confirm the call.
- The team winning the toss shall choose one of the following options (Game officials: Always ask a coach, do not let players make the decision):

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- a. Begin on offense
 - b. Begin on defense
 - c. Designate which goal their team will defend.
- The loser of the coin toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.
 - The team that started the game on offense, will start the second half on defense.
 - Teams will play the opposite direction in the first half and the second half.
 - If an adult/coach does not attend the coin toss, the opposing team will win the toss.
 - To keep to the schedule, the game clock shall start one minute after the coin toss formalities have ended, whether the teams have taken the field or not.

NOTE: Coach/Player Box – During games, all coaches and players must be 2-yards (at least 6 feet) back from the sideline. This includes fans, tents, canopies, etc. Parents/spectators are NOT allowed on the sideline (besides the 2 volunteers for the chains/blitz poles). Also, coaches and players cannot be on the sideline 5 yards before the end zone. This is to allow the chain & blitz pole volunteers and referees a clear path on the sideline. This is also for player safety and to avoid collisions.

GAME LENGTH, TIMING & OVERTIME

- Games are played with a 40-minute continuous clock, TWO 20-minute halves.
- The clock will stop at every dead ball inside 2 minutes of each half if the score is within 10 points.
- There will be a 2-minute warning (clock stops) before halftime and the conclusion of the game.
- Halftime is five minutes.
- Game will Start with Offensive, and ball placed on the 5-yard line.
- 2nd half will start with offensive, and ball placed on the 5-yard line.
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
- Each team has TWO 60 second time-out per half. (Reg Season & Tournaments).
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
- If the score is tied at the end of regulation, the game will go into overtime to determine a winner.
- Overtime: Overtime will start with a coin toss to decide who will take first possession. There will be 10 additional minutes for overtime (normal clock management will apply).
NOTE: Each team has TWO 60 second time-outs. Timeouts do not carry over.
- Ball placed on the 5-yard line at the start of the 1st OT period.
 - 2nd Overtime – If after the 10-minute overtime, the game is still tied we will proceed to the 2nd overtime rules: NOTE: Each team has ONE 60 second time-out. Timeouts do not carry over. Each team will have four plays starting from their opponent's 12-yard line. At the end of the first team's possession, the other

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- team must match or beat any score. If a team scores, they will also go for a 1, 2, or 3 PAT.
- 3rd & Final Overtime - If the teams are still tied after the 2nd overtime, another coin toss will take place. The winner of the coin toss will choose offense or defense and a single possession of 4 downs (Starting at Midfield) will take place. If the offensive team scores, they win, if the defensive team prevents a score they win. NOTE: Each team has ONE 60 second timeout. Timeouts do not carry over.

HOME & AWAY TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- The HOME team & AWAY team will both be responsible for scorekeeping and stat keeping (referees will have the official score and will check with the scorekeepers periodically). Stat keeping only needs to be done for your own team. Score & Stat Sheets must be turned into the main tent after each game.
- The HOME team will oversee changing the scoreboard. The officials for the scheduled game will also keep the score of the game.
- The AWAY team will oversee the Blitz Marker Chains (2 volunteers will be needed. This is a great way for parents/family members to watch the game from the sideline).
 - **7-yard Blitz Marker Chains for 6U & 8U Divisions**
 - **10-yard Blitz Marker Chains for 10U, 12U, 14U & 16U Divisions**

Note: Each team will have their own game responsibilities. It is the coach's responsibility to find willing and capable volunteers to manage the blitz marker, chains, and scoreboard. These responsibilities will be time sensitive. It is of the utmost importance that the blitz chains are set up as fast as possible to keep the game moving and allow coaches to run a "2 min offense" if desired. The inability of either team to manage their responsibilities in timely manner, may result in a delay of game penalty. Volunteers must be an appropriate age to handle the weight and the fast pace of moving the chains without causing a delay in the game. If the volunteer is unable to handle the requirements the referee will ask the coach to find an immediate replacement.

CLOCK MANAGEMENT

- The ball is LIVE at the snap of the ball and remains LIVE until the official calls the ball DEAD.
- The play is still live when a "Neutral Zone" infraction occurs. After the play, the team without the infraction will decide on whether to accept the penalty or to accept the play instead.
- A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds if they come down with ONE foot in bounds on the field of play.
- During the QB's cadence, the defense may not mimic or copy them.
- Substitutions may be made at any time after a play is completed.
 - An injured player must sit out the next play. Clock will start when player is removed.

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- The ball will be considered dead when the official blows their whistle. The officials will only blow their whistles when:
 - the ball carrier is ruled down
 - the ball is fumbled
 - an incomplete pass is thrown
 - a touchdown, extra point, or safety is scored
 - a penalty is called that ends the play
 - If an official blows their whistle without any of the above situations it will be ruled an inadvertent whistle. If there is an inadvertent whistle, the team with possession can elect to accept the result of the play or redo the down.
- There are NO fumbles in flag football. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground. If the ball progresses forward during the fumble, the ball will be placed where the player was upon fumbling. The ball CANNOT progress forward from the original Line of Scrimmage or LOS. If the ball hits the ground behind the player, the ball will be placed where it landed and will be considered a loss of yards. If a fumble occurs in the team's own end zone, a safety will be awarded to the opposing team.

NOTE: In the 6U and 8U divisions – the referee will place the ball on the LOS after a play. In the 10U, 12U, 14U and 16U divisions, the offensive team will place the ball on the LOS. The LOS will be marked by the referee, who will have his foot pointed to the spot where the ball should be placed.

NOTE: The AWAY team volunteer will pull the blitz pole once the down indicator is placed on the LOS. The blitz pole location will be marked by a 7- or 10-yard chain.

SCORING

- Touchdown: 6 Points
- PAT (Point After Touchdown)
 - 1 Point (5 Yard line) (PASS ONLY) (6U division – RUN OR PASS)
 - 2 Points (12 Yard line) (PASS OR RUN)
 - 3 Points (20 Yard line) (PASS OR RUN)
- If a penalty occurs during a PAT, the penalty will be assessed but the extra point value remains the same. Point conversion choices cannot be changed after a penalty.
- Personal and unsportsmanlike fouls by the defense on a successful PAT are enforced on the next possession, or next spot in overtime periods.
- Fouls committed by the offense on a successful PAT will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.
- Fouls committed by the offense on an unsuccessful PAT will be declined by rule (exception: personal and unsportsmanlike fouls).
- Safety: 2 Points (Down in your own End zone). Ball will be placed at your own 5-yard line. No throw-offs.
- PAT Interception- Interceptions on PATs may be returned by the defense for 2-points.

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SCORING CELEBRATIONS

- SWFINEST NFL FLAG allows team celebrations after scoring plays!
- Celebration must be tasteful, classy, and cannot be offensive, vulgar, or inappropriate for a youth environment. Celebrations are meant to be fun and are not meant to be used to gloat or be directed towards the opposing team.
- Celebrations must be quick and cannot delay the game. Players will not be allowed to spike the ball at any time.
- Referees will use their discretion to decide if a celebration is offensive, inappropriate, or has delayed the game.
- CELEBRATIONS ARE NOT ALLOWED, BY THE WINNING TEAM, IF THE GAME IS IN SCRIMMAGE MODE.

RUNNING

- The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag was pulled.
- Quarterback sneaks are not allowed.
- In the 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U and 16U age divisions, the QB can run if:
 - The defense crosses the LOS when rushing from the blitz marker (7 or 10 yards from LOS). If you're in the No-Run-Zone, you cannot run even if you are blitzed.
 - The QB may run if the ball is handed off and then handed back to the QB.
Officials must see daylight or clear exchange of the football.
- All handoffs must occur behind the line of scrimmage and there are no limits on the number of handoffs executed.
- No-Run-Zones shall be 5 yards before the midfield First Down and 5 yards before the end zone.
- No handoffs shall be given between the legs of any player.
- The ball carrier is ruled down when:
 - Their flags are pulled,
 - Their flags fall off,
 - They step out of bounds,
 - Any part of their body, other than the foot or hand, touches the ground,
 - If they receive a pass or handoff without both flags on,
 - If they receive a pass or handoff with his jersey covering their flags,
 - If their flags are below their waist.
- The QB cannot directly hand the ball back to the center after the snap. It will be permitted if the center takes the hand-off after rolling behind the QB.
- Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage.
- Flag Guarding – Jerseys must be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and cannot be obstructed. Deliberately obstructed flags, with their hands, the football or in any other way will be considered flag guarding. (You are permitted to wear small playbooks on the front of your flags, but they must not obstruct the flags in any manner)

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- When a shirt is untucked at the snap a “holding” call on a defender is unlikely when a defender is making a fair and legal attempt at the ball carrier’s flag and ends up with their opponents’ jersey or excess belt in lieu of the flag belt. Keep shirts tucked in and belts secured.
- Once you are in the No-Run-Zone, you will stay in the No-Run-Zone, even if a penalty occurs and takes you out. If a player is ruled down, for a loss of yards (without a penalty), and they are now behind the No-Run-Zone, they can now run or pass once again.
- The player who takes the hand off can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball has been handed off in front or behind the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush past the line of scrimmage.
- Runners cannot jump or lunge forward to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, lunging, or jumping is considered flag guarding. Jumping is allowed if it is lateral or backwards. (If a runner leaves their feet to avoid injury or collision it will be at the discretion of the officials whether it was allowed or not)
- Spinning is allowed.

PASSING

- All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Screen passes are allowed behind the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed from behind the LOS.
- From the time the ball is snapped, the QB shall have SEVEN seconds to either hand the ball off to another player or pass the ball. After 7 seconds a penalty flag will be thrown but the play continues (in case the defense intercepts the ball).
- Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
- Any player may legally pass the ball if they are behind the line of scrimmage
- Any player who goes out of bounds becomes ineligible to receive a pass.
- All players are eligible to receive a pass, including the QB if the ball was handed off.
- There may only be one forward pass on any down. Players may not catch a pass, run behind the line of scrimmage, and pass again.
- The ball is spotted where the receiver’s FRONT foot is when the flag is pulled on the sidelines and NOT where the ball is when the flag was pulled.
- Defensive players must give right of way to an offensive player running their routes. This includes legal blitzers.
- Interceptions are live turnovers. Any player making an interception may return the ball until marked down. The team will begin their possession where they were ruled down.
- Intentional Grounding- There will be NO intentional grounding. The QB must throw the ball forward or out of bounds to avoid a loss of yards. Passes thrown backwards, in bounds, will be considered a dead ball where the ball lands and the ball will be placed at the spot it landed for the next down.

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RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the QB if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Before QB cadence (center holds ball ready for play), shifts are allowed.
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel or backwards of the line of scrimmage
- NO motion is permitted towards the LOS.
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

BLOCKING/ILLEGAL SCREENING

- Blocking is obstructing or physically contacting an opponent with any part of the body.
- Illegal Screening is when an offensive player materially impedes the defender from getting to the player with the ball by abruptly stepping in the defender's path or taking a position (two or less normal strides away) in a defender's line of travel that forces the defender to abruptly veer around his opponent. This is a judgment call.
- Physical-contact blocking (as seen in traditional football) and non-contact blocking "screen blocking" (as seen in basketball) are not allowed even if unintentional. This is a difficult transition for traditional football players.
- Ball carriers cannot use their teammates as a screen by "juking around" or "hiding behind" them.
- A penalty may be called even when an offensive player accidentally obstructs a defender.
- Offensive players must be aware that they may be penalized for screening by simply chasing the play and providing an inadvertent block or screen.
- Passers caught between a ball carrier and a rushing defender will not be screening if there is no clear and obvious attempt to be doing so.
- "Pick plays" (often seen in basketball) or "rub routes" are not allowed as these plays are designed to initiate contact or to screen-out defenders. Receivers going down field after the snap may not initiate contact with an opponent.

FLAG GUARDING/STIFF-ARMING

- The ball carrier's flags must be accessible to the defense throughout the play.
- Flag guarding is the act of a ball carrier denying a defender the opportunity to capture his flag in any physical way.
- Flags may not be tucked in pants, tucked under jerseys, worn improperly, looped around the waist belt, or knotted.
- The ball carrier shall not flag guard by flailing of arms, using their hands, arms, elbows, or extremely dipped shoulders to deny the opportunity of an opponent to remove a flag.
- The ball carrier may not swat a defender's hands away nor pin the flag against his body using the ball or hands.

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- An official may call flag guarding if he feels that a ball carrier's natural running motion gave the ball carrier a decisive advantage over the defender and the running motion caused part of the ball carrier's body to block a de-flagging attempt.
- What constitutes flag guarding is up to the official's judgment. We recommend you carry the ball with your hands held high on the body to avoid flag guarding. This is one of the most difficult transitions for traditional football players.
- Flag guarding shall not be called if there is no defensive player within reasonable distance to capture the flag.
- The ball carrier may bend at the knees to dip low; side cut, skip, or take short hops.
- Extreme low dips (sometimes called a "duck-walk") are legal and do not constitute flag guarding in themselves if the flag carrier's flags are still exposed and the defensive player isn't physically impeded (i.e., the ball carrier isn't using his arms, hands, shoulder, ball, etc., to impede the defender). Normally flag guarding can be avoided while "duck-walking" when the ball carrier keeps his hands and elbows high on the body (example: at shoulder-level).
- No penalty will be called if a ball carrier simultaneously flag guards as the defender pulls the flag. Remind the player not to flag guard.
- Tampering with the flag in any way to gain advantage is illegal and will be dealt with.

BATTING

- Any ball in flight may be batted in any direction by an eligible receiver.

KICK-OFFS/THROW-OFFS & PUNTS

- After a PAT, the scoring team will proceed to do a "Throw Off". Throw offs are like kickoffs in tackle football but instead of kicking, one player will throw the ball to the opposing team's side of the field. The throw off is returnable.
- One player will throw the ball and all other players must be behind the player throwing the ball.
- Throw Off starting locations are as follows:
 - 6U - No Throw Offs. Ball will be placed on their own 5-yard line.
 - 8U - No Throw Offs. Ball will be placed on their own 5-yard line.
 - 10U - Throw Offs will start from the teams own 20 Yard Line (Half-Field Line)
 - 12U - Throw Offs will start from the teams own 12 Yard Line (Teams own 2-point LOS)
 - 14U & 16U - Throw Offs will start from the teams own 5 Yard Line (Teams own 1-point LOS)
- During throw offs, the player receiving the ball must be allowed to catch the ball unobstructed by the opposing team. The receiver may choose to down the ball where it is (by kneeling) or attempt to return it.
- Once the receiver catches the ball, all other teammates must remain still- NO blocking!
- Once the receiver catches the ball, the play will be considered a run and the RUNNING RULES will be applied.

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- If the ball bounces on a throw-off, an offensive player may scoop the ball off the bounce, the player becomes a runner and may return the ball, the play will be considered a run and the RUNNING RULES will be applied.
- **Throw offs must remain in bounds-If the throw off goes out of bounds (on the sideline), a penalty will be called, and the ball will be placed at the 20-yard line. Only during this time, the offense will have the option of running and or passing. If the ball goes out of bounds in the endzone (back or side), a touchback will be awarded, and the ball will be placed on the 5-yard line.**
- For safety reasons, there are no fumbles in flag football. The throw off team may not attempt to recover the ball.
- PUNTS will be treated like a touchback and will be placed at the opposing teams own 5 Yard Line. NO THROW OFFS FOR PUNTS.
- If the receiver catches the ball in the end zone and drops the ball- it will be ruled as a touchback.
- If the ball touches an offensive player and then touches the ground, it will be a dead ball and will spotted where it hit the ground.
- If a defensive player touches the ball first, it will be a dead ball and will be spotted where the defensive player touched the ball.
- If the ball bounces off the receiver and into the arms of a defender, it will be treated like an interception.

BLITZING/RUSHING THE PASSER

- The blitz/rush line is defined as the line parallel to and seven or ten yards beyond the line of scrimmage. The blitzer/rusher must have their entire body entirely behind the blitz marker (held by the AWAY team.)
- Any defensive player behind the rush line at the time of the snap is a legal rusher and is allowed to cross the line of scrimmage. The defensive team may have any number of legal rushers.
- A safety, 2 points, is awarded if a sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.
- If the QB hands the ball off, all defensive players become legal rushers from any distance.
- The rusher may raise his hands to the QB but cannot make contact with the QB in any way.
- Once a rusher crosses the line of scrimmage, they cannot make contact with the QB, and they cannot scream at the QB. (Discretion of the officials)
- If a rusher leaves the rush line early, they may return to the rush line, reset, and then legally rush the QB.
- A penalty will be called if:
 - The blitzer/rusher leaves the blitz/rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a hand off or pass.
 - Any defensive player crossing the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped and was not behind the blitz/rush line.

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- The Offense cannot impede the blitz/rusher in any way. The blitz/rusher must have a clear path to the QB. If any offensive player interferes and blocks the path of the blitz/rusher they will be penalized for screening. The defense may attempt to block a pass as long as they do not strike the passer.

CHARGING

- Charging will be called if the defensive player has established his feet and the ball carrier does not attempt to avoid them and directly collides with this defensive player.

FORMATIONS

- An offensive team must have a minimum of 1 player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and can have up to 4 players on the line of scrimmage. The QB must be off the line of scrimmage.
- Once cadence begins, only one player at a time may go in motion. (One player is allowed in motion and does not have to be set upon the quarterback snapping the ball)
- No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
- Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs towards the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
- The center must snap the ball with a continuous motion between their legs to the QB in the back field. If the center does not snap the ball accordingly, a false start penalty will be called. (If the center picks up/jerks the ball in a snapping motion and brings the ball back down the offense will be penalized with a false start)
- **6U & 8U on field coaches- Coaches are not allowed to verbally or physically direct their player once the ball is in play. After the hike.**
 - **Coaches must be 7 yards back when the play begins and must be out of the way of the play or an impeding penalty will be called.**

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT POLICY

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct – Any player, coach, or spectator committing any action deemed to be unsportsmanlike. This includes but is not limited to foul language, spiking the ball, tackling (any excessive contact), inciting violence, trash talk, or arguing with officials.
- Coaches, Parents and Families will not interact with OPPOSING TEAM Coaches, Parents and Families in a Derogatory, Offensive, Harassing or Profane Manner NO MATTER WHAT. Our League is one of GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP and UNDERSTANDING. If REFEREES observe this behavior they have the understanding that they can stop the GAME and bring the LEAGUE COMMISSIONER or the LEAGUES DULY NOTED REPRESENTATIVE to handle the situation.
- Offensive language toward players, coaches, or officials is illegal. If offensive language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the individual will be ejected from the game.

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- Any offensive gestures by players or coaches like throat slashing should be an unsportsmanlike penalty. (**Discretionary for referees to give warning first**) players or coaches that continue after penalty can be ejected.
- If a defensive player mimics a QB's cadence (such as saying "hike") an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be called.
- If a coach/fan/parent is asked to leave the game because they have been unsportsmanlike and they do not leave, the game WILL BE forfeited. (Awarding the win to the opposing team regardless of the score)
- SWFINEST NFL FLAG will have a ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY, regarding any physical or verbal abuse. SWFINEST NFL FLAG provides a safe and fun environment for everyone involved. Abusive or offensive behavior WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.
- **Sideline misconduct will be disciplined as follows:**
 - ✓ 1st warning is 5-yard penalty.
 - ✓ 2nd warning is a 15-yard penalty with warning of ejection.
 - ✓ 3rd warning is ejection with review from coach's commission for possible further discipline and suspensions for offending party/parties.
- **Coaches who have violated SWFINEST NFL FLAG's code of conduct or unsportsmanlike conduct policy will be subject to League Fines of \$50. (Or further action deemed necessary by League Commissioners, not limited to league activities suspensions, or expulsion without a refund)**
- **COACHES- You will be responsible for ensuring your assistant coaches, parents and players abide by the SWFINEST NFL FLAG Code of Conduct. Any team violating the code of conduct may be subject to team discipline, suspensions, or fines.**

BENCH FOULS OR WARNINGS

- Teams may incur bench fouls for a variety of reasons to include but not limited to:
 1. Players or non-players interfering with play or an official
 2. Disrespect toward officials or other players or non-players
 3. Players or non-players in the designated restricted zone during a live play
 4. Non-players on the field of play
 5. Teams not remaining in the designated team box
 6. Coaches on the field or becoming entangled in a live play
 7. Players or non-players not on or staying on their team's side of the field (This will be strictly enforced)

END OF SEASON TOURNAMENT SEEDING

- The end of season tournament seeding (placement within bracket) will be determined by standings (season game record) within each conference (AFC or NFC).

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- In the event of a tie within the standings, the tie breaker for those 2 teams (or more), will be determined by which opponent won the game they played against each other.
- In the event where the two teams (or more) with exact records did not play each other during the season, the tie breaker will be determined by point differential within the regular season.

PENALTIES

- Game officials shall have sole authority on calling all penalties. SWFINEST NFL FLAG's head official on the field will have the right to overrule a penalty called by any other official(s).
- Fighting and physical violence is strictly prohibited. Any Coach, Player, or Parent involved in fighting or physical violence will be permanently removed from SWFINEST NFL FLAG without reimbursement.
- If a head coach believes an official has made a procedural error, he may call for a timeout. If the head official agrees that there has been a procedural error (example: wrong down, incorrect penalty yardage, improper rule interpretation, score recorded incorrectly, etc.), the procedural error will be addressed, and the timeout will not be charged.
- The challenge must be made to an official before the next snap.
- In the event a head coach loses a procedural challenge, and the team did not possess a legal team timeout, a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed to the head coach. If a coach receives two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, he will be disqualified and must leave the event.
- Only procedural issues may be addressed, not an official's judgment call or no call.
- **NOTE:** If there is an inadvertent whistle, the play is dead. The team on offense will have 2 options: 1) take the result of the play where it was blown dead or 2) redo the down.

Offensive Penalties & their definitions:

1. **Delay of Game** – Failing to snap the ball within thirty (30) seconds of the official blowing the ready whistle; snapping the ball before the ready whistle; or excessive celebrations.
2. **7-Second Violation** – The QB failing to pass or handoff the ball within seven (7) seconds of the snap.
3. **False Start** – Any player, after becoming set, making any motion towards the line of scrimmage prior to the snap of the ball; the center making any movement simulating a snap without completing the snap.
Note: It is not a false start for the QB to not take the ball immediately from the center. A false start shall not be called on the center until he makes movement to put the ball back down.
4. **Illegal Play or Run** – A ball carrier running the ball across the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped from the no-run-zone, even if there is a blitz or a pitch or lateral. No runs allowed in the no-run-zone.

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5. **Illegal Forward Pass** – Any player throwing a pass from over the line of scrimmage.
6. **Illegal Contact** – Any player intentionally initiating contact with a defender; a ball carrier not avoiding a planted defender; pushing or shoving; tackling.
7. **Pass Interference** – Any player contacting a defender attempting a catch without being in the action of attempting a catch himself; pushing off a defender to make a catch.
8. **Flag Guarding** – A ball carrier using his/her hands/arms to prevent his/her flag from being pulled; a ball carrier jumping or diving to advance the ball. Any offensive player running with the ball carrier once he/she is across the line of scrimmage. If a ball carrier flag guards in his/her own end zone, it is a safety.
9. **Impeding the Rusher**- Purposely blocking or impeding the path of the defensive rusher
10. **Charging**- Directly running through a defensive player who has their feet established
11. **Shadowing/Blocking** – Any player making a movement to intentionally deter a defender from reaching the ball carrier. After the ball has crossed the LOS all players without possession of the ball must stop moving.
12. **Offsides** – Any player standing on or over the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
13. **Illegal Shift** – Having two or more players in motion at the time of the snap. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. This will be considered a dead ball penalty.
14. **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – Any player, coach, or spectator committing any action deemed to be unsportsmanlike. This includes but is not limited to foul language, spiking the ball, inciting violence, trash talk, or arguing with officials.
15. **Tackling** – Any player who uses deliberate force to take a player down. This will result in unsportsmanlike and flagrant penalty. Officials' discretion for ejection for tackling.

Defensive Penalties & their definitions:

1. **Offsides** – Any player standing on or over the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
2. **Pass Interference** - Any player contacting a receiver attempting a catch without being in the action of attempting a catch themselves; any player not giving right of way to a receiver running his route.
3. **Illegal Flag Pull** – Pulling the flag of an offensive player before they have possession of the ball.
4. **Illegal Rush** – Any player not behind the rush line at the time of the snap that crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff; any rusher jumping once across the line of scrimmage; any rusher yelling or screaming at the passer.
5. **Illegal Contact** – Any player intentionally initiating contact with an offensive player; moving directly into the path of the ball carrier and contacting the ball carrier; making ANY contact with the QB.
6. **Holding/Impeding** – Any player grabbing the jersey or uniform of an offensive player; any player contacting the ball carrier hindering their forward progress.

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7. **Stripping** - Any player going for the ball instead of the flags.
8. **Roughing the Passer** – Any rusher making ANY contact with the passer, regardless of intent.
9. **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – Any player, coach, or spectator committing any action deemed to be unsportsmanlike. This includes but is not limited to spiking the flag of an opponent, tackling (taking a player to the ground intentionally), inciting violence, trash talk, or arguing with officials.
10. **Tackling** – Any player who uses deliberate force to take a runner or receiver down. This will result in unsportsmanlike and flagrant penalty. Officials’ discretion for ejection of tackling.

NOTE:

- Only the Head Coach may call a timeout to ask the referee questions about the rule clarification and interpretations.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty UNLESS the offense declines it.
- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance.

ALL offensive penalties result in a loss of down (Except for False Starts).

ALL defensive penalties result in an automatic first down (Except for Offsides).

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES

<u>PENALTY</u>	<u>RESULT</u>
1) Delay of Game	LOS-5 Yards
2) 7 Second Violation	Loss of Down
3) False Start/ Offsides	5 Yards
4) Illegal Play/Run	5 Yards + Loss of Down
5) Illegal Forward Pass	LOS-5 Yards + Loss of Down
6) Illegal Contact	LOS-5 Yards + Loss of Down
7) Pass Interference	LOS-5 Yards + Loss of Down
8) Flag Guarding	Spot Foul -5 Yards + Loss of Down
9) Impeding the Rusher	LOS -5 Yards + Loss of Down
10) Charging	Spot Foul +10 Yards + Loss of Down
11) Shadowing/Blocking	LOS- 5 Yards + Loss of Down
12) Illegal Shift/Motion	LOS-5 Yards + Loss of Down
13) Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Spot Foul or LOS-5 Yards + Loss of Down
14) Tackling	Spot Foul -15 Yards + Loss of Down

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NOTE: If there is an inadvertent whistle, the play is dead. The team on offense will have 2 options: 1) take the result of the play where it was blown dead or 2) redo the down.

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES

<u>PENALTY</u>	<u>RESULT</u>
1) Offsides	LOS-5 Yards
2) Pass Interference	Spot Foul + 1st Down (<u>if penalty occurs in end zone ball will be placed at 1 Yard Line</u>)
3) Illegal Flag Pull	Spot Foul + 5 Yards + 1st Down
4) Illegal Rush	5 Yards + 1 st Down
5) Illegal Contact	Spot Foul +5 Yards + 1st Down
6) Holding/Impeding	Spot Foul +5 Yards + 1st Down
7) Stripping	Spot Foul +5 Yards + 1st Down
8) Roughing the Passer	Spot Foul +5 Yards + 1st Down
9) Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Spot Foul +5 Yards + 1st Down
10) Tackling	Spot Foul +15 Yards + Loss of Down

NOTE: If an illegal flag pull, holding, stripping, or tackling is called on the last defender, a touchdown will be awarded.

NOTE: If there is an inadvertent whistle, the play is dead. The team on offense will have 2 options: 1) take the result of the play where it was blown dead or 2) redo the down.

RULE MODIFICATION

- Modifications of these rules for local sensitivities and practicalities may be accomplished with the coordination and approval of the Director of Officiating, SWFINEST NFL FLAG.