



SPECIAL OLYMPICS FLORIDA

Sunshine Bowl

FLAG FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT RULES

Waiver

- For each division, every participant must be 18 years of age to play and must sign game day waivers prior to participation.
- If you register online, then you will have signed the waiver. If you do a paper registration, then it is the responsibility of the head coach/team captain to provide signed waivers from all players on the team to the event coordinator by game day.

General Guidelines

- Player Safety:
 - Every participant must sign a waiver prior to participation in order to be eligible to play. It shall be the responsibility of the team coach/captain to provide these to the games committee.
- Teams are required to clean up their garbage after contests.
- Tobacco use and consumption of alcohol is strictly prohibited on the fields.
- Flag Football is a non-contact sport. All rulings on the field shall be made with player safety as the primary consideration.
- The head coach and/or captain shall be responsible for making every player aware of the rules prior to any participation in any game.
- Teams shall field 6 players to start the game.
 - Rosters may include up to 15 players.
 - Teams shall have 4 to start the game or it will result in a forfeit.
 - All players shall only be on one roster unless the second team of choice is a co-ed roster.
- Game will start with a coin toss. The winner will choose to play offense or defense.
- All possessions will start at the 5-yard line, with the exception of an interception.
 - There will be no punts or kick-offs.
 - The offense will have 4 plays to cross mid-field.
 - Once the offense crosses mid-field, they will have 4 additional plays to score a touchdown.
 - If the offensive team fails to cross mid-field or score a touchdown in the prescribed number of plays, possession will change and the opposite team starts back at the 5-yard line.
 - The ball will always be marked at the spot where the position of the ball is when the player is whistled down.



Equipment & Uniforms

- A regulations men's ball will be used in all divisions, with the exception of the co-ed, women's, and youth divisions.
 - Both teams may use their own football if approved by the official.
 - Co-Ed, women's, and youth divisions may use a youth-size football.
- A one-piece, 2-flag belt must be worn at all times, and is provided by SOFL.
 - Flags must be worn at the waistline with one flag on each side of the player's hip.
- Shirts must be tucked in, **no exception**, at all times.
- Shorts/pants with NO pockets must be worn.
 - If pockets zip shut, then they can be worn.
 - No tape or reversal of shorts will be allowed.
- All players must wear a protective mouthpiece while on the field of play.
- Players may wear rubber/plastic cleats or athletic shoes.
 - Metal cleats and spikes are not acceptable.
- No watches, wristbands, bracelets, rings, or any other jewelry-like accessories shall be worn on the wrist/hand.

Timing

- Games will 30 minutes running clock, until the last 2 minutes of the game
 - Each team is permitted 1 timeout per game
 - Time outs are 30-seconds.
 - Clock will only stop on injuries and timeouts
 - A stop-clock scenario will be in effect starting at the 2-minute mark. Clock will stop on all dead ball whistles
 - Officials may stop the clock as needed.
- There will be no clock for overtime
 - Each team will get one chance (4 plays) to score from midfield.
 - Winner will be determined by points scored or yardage gained.
- Every down, there will be a 25-second play clock to snap the ball

Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Extra Points: 1 point from the 5-yard line or 2 points from the 10-yard line
 - ONLY the 2-point attempt is returnable upon interception.
 - No blitzing on extra pts.
 - QB **will not** be allowed to run from the Five (5) yard line & in & must throw a forward pass over the Line of Scrimmage (LOS).



- Safety: 2 points
 - Awarded to the defensive team if the ball carrier has their flag pulled or “fumbles” the ball into their own end zone.
- No mercy rule will be in effect at any point in time of the game.

Running the Ball

- The Quarterback cannot advance the ball across the line of scrimmage.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Laterals or pitches (legally known as backward passes) of any kind are not allowed.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the quarterback/offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage.
- The offense may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage.
- “Center Sneak” – the ball must completely leave the center’s hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive the direct handoff from the quarterback/offensive player before advancing the ball.
- The ball carrier may not stiff arm or shield their flag from being pulled by a defender.
- The ball will be marked at the spot of where the ball is positioned when declared down.
 - Ball is declared down when the player’s flag clip is “broken,” the ball carrier’s knee touches the ground, or the ball is “fumbled” and hits the ground.
 - The football will be considered an extension of the arm. If any hand by itself or with the ball in possession touches the ground, it will not be blown dead.
- Flag Guarding is not allowed and will be defined by the following:
 - Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt
 - Stiff arm
 - Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt
 - Lowering the shoulders or arm over the flag belt
- The defense may not push the ball carrier out of bounds nor use contact to disrupt a play.
- If the ball carrier’s flag falls off inadvertently during a play, the play will be blown dead.
- There will be no fumbles.
 - Ball is to be considered dead when it hits the ground.
 - If the ball is “fumbled” during a hand-off exchange or a receiver’s hand, it will be marked down at the spot.
 - A “fumbled” ball cannot be intercepted or caught in the air.
- Ball carriers are allowed to leave their feet, jump, and spin as evasive maneuvers in order to advance the ball as long as they do not put another player’s safety at risk. Not every insignificant jump or small hop constitutes a safety issue and player safety risk is at the discretion of each official. Jump cuts or leaping between two defenders is allowed if they do not initiate noteworthy contact with the defender or put another player’s safety at risk.



- Ball carriers may not hurdle over another player. Ball carriers may not dive, lunge, or fall forward in a perceived intentional manner in order to advance the ball or achieve a line-to-gain. This is a judgment call by the game officials.

Passing & Receiving

- All players on the field are eligible to receive a pass from the QB (first person receiving the snap).
- Only 1 player will be allowed in motion at the snap parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- There will only be 1 forward pass permitted per play.
 - Backwards passes will be unlimited.
 - You may not lateral back to someone behind the LOS once you've crossed it and have that person throw a forward pass.
 - You cannot step over the LOS and go back behind it and pass.
- If the passer's flag has been pulled while the passer still has the ball in their hand, it is a sack. There is no allowance given for the passer's arm being in motion at the time of the sack. Ball in hand at all equals a sack.
- A passer may not throw the ball into the ground to avoid a loss of yardage or conserve time.
- Players need at least 1 foot in bounds when making a catch.
 - All interceptions are returnable, with the exception of a 1-point extra point conversion attempt.
- Ineligible Receivers
 - All players must start the down with a flag belt on.
 - Those who start the down with no flag belt will be deemed an "ineligible receiver."
 - All players are eligible to receive a pass unless they have stepped out-of-bounds of their own accord. Players may re-establish themselves in the field of play and catch the ball if another player has touched the ball first.
- Passes caught simultaneously with the defense will be blown dead immediately and be awarded to the offense.
- Defenders may not strip the ball from the carrier's hands, nor deflag a receiver before catching the ball.
 - If deflagged player receives the ball, the play will be blown dead and a penalty will be administered.
- The ball will be declared dead if any portion of the ball carrier's body other than their hands and feet (knee, elbow, buttocks, ball-in-hand, etc.) touches the ground.

Rushing

- All players rushing the QB will have a verbal 5-second count by the official.
 - Count will be a "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and 5 and go"
 - The rusher will be eligible to break the line of scrimmage upon hearing "go!"



- There is no maximum to the number of rushers allowed, nor is there a requirement to rush the QB.
- Teams may rush during any down.
- Rushers may not “rough the passer” on a pass attempt.
 - The ball will be considered an extension of the hand, and physical contact made with the ball while it is still in the hand of the passer or any part of the passer’s body will be considered illegal.
- No bull rushing by any player (Players cannot take a running start at another, barreling over).

Blocking

- Screening by any player behind the line of scrimmage is allowed as long as there is no contact.
 - Screeners must have their arms fully extended to the ground at their sides or behind their backs
 - Any use of arms, elbows, legs, shoulders, or hips to initiate contact during their screen is illegal.
 - Screen blockers must also give the defender 1 step.
 - After the snap, the blocker may move laterally or backward 2 steps.
- Downfield blocking is allowed as long as the individual blocking is still and does not move.
 - This blocker may not run between the ball carrier and the defender in an effort to impede the defender’s progress to the flag.
- Blockers at any point in time may not leave the ground and must be on their feet prior and post-block.

Formation

- Line of Scrimmage (LOS)
 - The offensive team will have to have a minimum of 3 players on the LOS prior to and during the snap.
 - A cone will mark the LOS.
 - Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless they are the only player in motion.
 - Teams may have one player in motion parallel to the LOS
- The “center” must snap the ball directly to the person who does the cadence
 - Ball may be hiked through the legs of the center or in a “sideways” motion.
- The person who receives the snap must be a minimum of 2 yards behind the center.



Defense

- A player is considered down when the flag belt's clip becomes broken, or the flag belt falls off inadvertently.
- Tackling or pushing the ball carrier out of bounds or on the ground is prohibited.
- Defensive players may not pull the receiver's flag before the ball is caught.
- Defenders may not grab or hold onto the offensive players in order to pull the flag.
 - If the grab/hold occurs simultaneously with the flag clip breaking, then there will be no penalty called.
- Stripping or attempting to strip the ball from a player's hand, including the quarterback, is illegal.
- Defensive teams may not simulate the offensive team's signals or cadence. (Unsportsmanlike)
- Whether or not a ball is tipped in the air has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls (roughing, personal fouls, etc.).

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- There will be a ZERO tolerance policy for unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Behavior deemed unsportsmanlike is subject, but not limited to:
 - Fighting
 - Taunting
 - Harassing officials or players
 - Cursing at officials or players
 - Unnecessary roughness (including tackling)
- Any team/player (during a game or not) with such behavior will be subject to penalties during a game, forfeiture of the team, or disqualification from the tournament and removal from the stadium.
 - Players receiving 2 unsportsmanlike penalties will be ejected from the game and disqualified from play for the games following.
 - If a player is ejected, they will have 1 minute to leave the field. If the player does not comply, the official may end the game and the offending team will receive a forfeit regardless of the current score.
- Foul play will not be tolerated. Any staff member that hears or sees anything that leads them to believe an infraction of the required personal conduct outline has been committed the person responsible may be dismissed for the rest of the tournament.

Penalties

- Players will have the option of accepting or declining all penalties.
 - There will be no option to only accept the penalty and not the yardage or vice versa.



- All penalties will be accepted from the line of scrimmage or spot of the foul.
 - Contact fouls: 5 yards
 - Non-contact: 3 yards
- All penalties will be replay down with the exception of roughing the passer and illegal forward pass.
- All defensive penalties on a scoring play will be assessed on the extra point.
- 3-yard Penalties:
 - Offside
 - False start
 - Illegal equipment
 - Ineligible receiver
 - Illegal participation
 - Illegal substitution
 - Illegal motion
 - Illegal shift
 - Delay of game
 - Illegal forward pass (loss of down)
 - Illegal flag pull
 - Illegal tied belt (subject to DQ)
 - Impeding the rush
- 5-yard penalties:
 - Holding
 - Pass interference
 - Illegal contact
 - Stiff arm
 - Stripping the ball
 - Pushing
 - Flag guarding
 - Unsportsmanlike conduct
 - Roughing the passer (automatic 1st down)

CO-ED Rules



Unless stated differently below, all rules will be the same as above

General Guidelines

- Rosters will still have 12 players
 - Teams will field 6 players while maintaining the ratio of 6 males and 2 females on the field at all times.
 - Teams may start with 4 but must keep an acceptable ratio.
 - Acceptable ratios (if playing with 4 or 5 players):
 - 3 males/1 female
 - 2 males/2 females
 - 3 males/2 females
 - Co-ed teams may substitute a female for a male, but never a male for a female

Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points (male) and 8 points (female).
- 8 points will be awarded to a female who scores a touchdown under the following conditions:
 - 1. Female catches a thrown pass in the end zone &/or runs after receiving the pass into the end-zone.
 - 2. Female is QB and either runs or throws a pass for a touchdown.
 - 3. Female is handed the ball behind the line of scrimmage (LOS) & runs the ball into the end zone.
 - 4. Female intercepts the ball and returns it for a touchdown.
- Extra points will be the same as other divisions.

Equipment & Uniforms

- Teams will have the option to either use a regulation size football or a youth size football
 - Both teams may use their own football if approved by the official.
- Both males and females must keep their shirts or jerseys tucked in at all times. No exception.

Unified Rules



General Guidelines

- Rosters will still have 15 players
 - Teams will field 6 players while maintaining the ratio of 4 unified partner and 2 athletes on the field at all times.
 - Teams may start with 5 but must keep an acceptable ratio.
 - Acceptable ratios (if playing with 5 players):
 - 2 unified partners/3 athletes
 - 3 unified partners/2 athletes
 - Co-ed teams may substitute an athlete for a unified partner, but never a unified partner for an athlete

Equipment & Uniforms

- Teams will have the option to either use a regulation size football or a youth size football
 - Both teams may use their own football if approved by the official.
- Both unified partners and athletes must keep their shirts or jerseys tucked in at all times. No exception.

Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points (unified partner) and 8 points (athlete)
Extra points will be the same as other divisions.

All Unified teams will follow the 2017 SONA Rulebook for flag football