



WELLNESS & HEALTH PROMOTION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

General

The *RecSports Participant Handbook* will govern all aspects of play not considered playing rules of the sport. Participants are expected to follow the Handbook rules of conduct as well as the sport-specific rules outlined below. The Handbook is available at und.edu/RecSports. Key Handbook items include:

- **Updates for 2023-2024'** - Handbook pg. 4
- **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Illegal Drugs** – Handbook pg. 6
- **Participant Eligibility/ID Requirements** – Handbook pg. 7
- **Playoff Requirements** – Handbook pg. 9
- **Captain Responsibilities** – Handbook pg. 10
- **Team Name Requirements** – Handbook pg. 12
- **Registration & Payment** – Handbook pg. 14
- **Default/Forfeit Instructions and Consequences** – Handbook pg. 17
- **Adding Players to Roster/Participation Limits** – Handbook pg. 18
- **Appropriate Attire** – Handbook pg. 19
- **Team/Participant Conduct** – Handbook pg. 21

Schedules

Schedules for league play are posted online through Fusion IM's.

Facility

All games will be played at Memorial Field on UND's campus, next to the Fritz Pollard Center.

Questions

Please feel free to contact RecSports with any questions or concerns.

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Rules

The RecSports program utilizes NFHS Football rules unless they are removed/modified below.

Players, Rosters, and Substitutions

- Teams will consist of 7 players. 5 players must be present to begin play. This is an Open League meaning there are no rules about gender ratios.
- Unlimited substitutions are allowed during a dead ball situation.

Equipment

- Practice balls must be provided by each team.
- Game balls will be provided by the RecSports staff, however, if both teams agree then a different football may be used.

- All participants are required to wear proper or appropriate footwear for competition. See the Handbook and Illegal Equipment below for some examples of unacceptable footwear.
- Each team is encouraged to have some type of uniform, which provides uniformity in color for all participants. In cases where teams do not have uniforms, all players will be required to wear a pinnie from RecSports.

Illegal Equipment

- Pads or braces worn above the waist
- Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in, or detachable cleats. EXCEPTION: Screw-in cleats are allowed if the screw is part of the cleat
- Shirts or jerseys which do not remain tucked in. Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt which does not remain tucked in. Tear-away jerseys or jerseys that have been altered in any manner which produces a knot-like protrusion or creates a tear-away jersey
- **Pants or shorts with any belt(s), or hard protruding material**
- Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped, and any other hard substance unless covered with at least ½" of closed cell, slow recovery or other material of similar thickness and physical properties
- Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on any equipment or exposed part of the body
- Equipment which includes computers or any electronic or mechanical devices for communication
- Exposed metal on clothes or person. This includes "O" or "D" rings used to secure flag belts
- Towels attached at the player's waist
- Any equipment the officials deem hazardous

Playing Field

- Field measurements - 100 x 53.33 yards; 80 yards between goal lines and two-10 yard end zones.
- The field consists of three first down lines (zone lines to gain) -- 20 yards apart.
- Midline is the 50 yard line.
- A team will receive four (4) consecutive downs to advance to the next zone.

Pre-Game Conference

Captains will meet with game officials to determine the options of taking the ball or defending a particular goal.

- Visiting team calls toss. There are deferrals - the team that wins the coin toss has the following options:
 - Choose to start on offense or defense
 - Choose which endzone to defend
- The team not winning the toss will have the remaining option.
- Teams will switch ends of the field at the half. Offense/defense is rotated.

The Game

- The game will consist of 2-20 minute halves with a running clock. During the final 2 minutes of both halves the clock will stop for:
 - Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass
 - Out of bounds
 - Score (touchdown or safety)
 - Time-out (official or team)
 - First down
 - Penalty & administration
 - Change of possession
 - Inadvertent whistle
- The clock will restart on the snap for any stoppage of play during the final 2 minutes. Clock will run during extra point attempts.
- **Each team will have 2-1 minute timeouts per half. Unused timeouts do not carry over.**
- In overtime, each team will have 1-1 minute timeout per overtime period. Unused timeouts do not carry over.

- Officials' timeouts:
 - Injury - charged to official - player must leave field and be replaced.
 - Injury with bleeding must leave field and may not return until inspected by a student supervisor, bleeding is stopped and wound is covered. Blood soaked clothing must be removed.
 - Protest - charged to official if the ruling is changed; charged to the team if the ruling is upheld. Judgment calls are NOT protestable (i.e. protesting a catch or a non-catch). Teams may only protest player eligibility or a rule interpretation (i.e. the foul called should be penalized with a 5yds penalty, not a 10yds penalty). Protests must be done at time of incident.
- There will be no kickoffs. In all "kickoff" situations, the receiving team will get the ball on their own 15 yard line. This includes all touchbacks and after touchdowns or safeties. The ball will be spotted at the center of the field in these instances.

Tie Game/Overtime

If a game ends with a tie score, the officials must bring all players and coaches of both teams to the center of the field. They will discuss the tie breaker procedures and answer all questions prior to the coin toss. After this meeting the captains will stay while the remaining players and coaches return to the sideline.

- A coin toss will occur for the first overtime period.
- The visiting team captain will call the toss and the winner has the option of offense or defense. Teams will alternate offense and defense at the start of each overtime period.
- The loser of the coin toss picks the goal for both teams. All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line.
- Unless moved by penalty, each team will start 1st and goal from the **10 yard line**.
- Consists of each team receiving a set of 4 downs. First downs cannot be earned in OT.
- During the regular season, if the score is still tied after 2 overtime periods, the game ends in a tie.
- During playoffs the teams will play until there is a winner. If the score remains tied for a potential 3rd overtime, both teams then must also attempt a 2-point conversion after a touchdown.
- If the first team awarded the ball scores, the opponent will have a chance to win or tie the game.
- If the defense intercepts the ball and returns it for a touchdown, they win the game. If they do not return the interception for a touchdown, the ball will be placed at the 10 yard line to begin their series of 4 downs.
- Each team is entitled to one time-out for the entire overtime period. Timeouts do not carry over.

Playing Rules – Defense

- Must go around offense and may not use hands or arms to run through opponents. No bull rushing!
- "Tackling" is done by pulling the ball carriers flag (must attempt to grab flag only). Attempts at the ball or holding the shirt, body, etc. is illegal.
- The defense has no rules on the number of players that are required on the line of scrimmage.
- Physical tackling is illegal and rules as unnecessary roughness. Penalty is 10 yards. If flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified.

Playing Rules - Offense

- At least 4 players must start on the line of scrimmage. (1 yard behind the line of scrimmage constitutes "off" line)
- Any player may move in motion, pending there are 4 offensive players on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. **Only one person may move in motion at once, and may be in motion during the snap.**
- All players are eligible for a pass.
- Only one FORWARD pass is allowed per down. A forward pass completed behind the line of scrimmage is still considered the one forward pass for that play.
- A player may hand the ball off forward if behind the line of scrimmage.
- Ball carrier may NOT: hurdle an opponent or flag guard.
- Ball carrier is allowed to spin.
- Use of hands is prohibited at all times by the offensive line. Any contact deemed intentional is illegal and will result in a 10 yard illegal contact penalty.

- Quarterback does not have to be rushed in order to run.
- **Excessive celebration** will be cause for a 10 yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. This is an official's judgment call and may not be protested.

Snapping the ball

- Offensive team is responsible for retrieving the ball after a scrimmage down. *Penalty:* 5 yards, delay of game.
- The ball must be put into play no more than 25 seconds after the official has marked it ready for play.
- All offensive players must remain motionless for 1 second before the ball can be snapped.
- All players must start from a 2 point stance ONLY.
- Direct snaps to the quarterback are not permitted. **The snap must be received at least 2 yards behind the line of scrimmage (i.e. the SHOTGUN formation).**
- Snaps to players in motion are not allowed.
- Snaps may be through the legs or a side-pitch. However, the ball must remain on the ground and motionless until the actual snap.
- Snapping the ball to a player on the line of scrimmage is not permitted.

Diving

Diving is prohibited when attempting to advance the ball. Players may dive to receive a pass only.

- Spinning and jumping are allowed during live ball situations. Players are not allowed to hurdle defensive players to prevent the defender from pulling their flags.
- When a player is down, the ball is spotted where the ball is at the time, not where the flags are.

Blocking

- Screen blocking only. Hands and arms do not need to be behind the back, however, initiating contact with your arms may result in a penalty.
- **Defensive players are responsible for most contact in between the tackles. Any attempt to "split" offensive linemen that results in contact will be a penalty on the defensive player.**
- Blockers can ONLY move laterally or backwards, but not forward on the line.
- Individuals are not permitted to use feet, knees, and elbows or to dip shoulders, trip or kick legs to initiate contact.
- Contact with an opponent on the ground is prohibited.
- Helping a ball carrier through pushing or contact is prohibited.
- Defensive players must go around a block - no holding, tackling, aggressive pushing or other use of arms and hands - no holding or obstruction of ball carrier to remove flag.
- Downfield blocking is allowed, but all screen blocking rules are still in effect.

Catch

- A catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball which is in flight, and first contacting the ground inbounds or being contacted by an opponent in such a way that he/she is prevented from returning to the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball.
 - If one foot first lands inbounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch or interception even though a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out-of-bounds.
 - A catch by any kneeling or prone inbounds player is a completion or interception.
 - Elements of a catch:
 - Control of the ball.
 - Two feet down or another body part.
 - A football move such as:
 - A third step
 - Reaching/extending for the line-to-gain
 - Or the ability to perform such an act

Scrimmage lines

- The scrimmage line for Team A is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes through the forward point of the ball. The scrimmage line for Team B is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes one yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. Team B's (defense) scrimmage line may extend into their end zone.

Zone Line to Gain

- The zone line to gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such case, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line to gain. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.
- If a runner temporarily breaks the plane of the line-to-gain before going out-of-bounds, it is a first down.

Interference

- Offensive pass interference – after the ball is snapped, and until the pass has been touched by any player, offensive players shall not initiate contact beyond the scrimmage line.
- Defensive pass interference – after the pass is thrown, and until the pass has been touched by any player, defensive players shall not initiate contact beyond the scrimmage line while the pass is in flight.

Fumbles

- Fumbles are dead where the fumble occurred. The team that fumbled the ball will retain possession.
- The play will be blown dead and the next play will begin at the point where the ball touched the ground.
- Intentionally attempting to "strip" the ball will result in a 10 yard penalty from the end of the run. All attempts at stopping progress must be made towards the opponent's flag belt.
- **Exception:** Ball flies forward. The ball will then be placed at the point it left the ball carrier's hands.

Inadvertent whistle

If an official inadvertently blows his/her whistle during a live ball play, the play shall be declared dead at that point and the following action will be taken:

- Offensive player did not possess the ball beyond the line of scrimmage – replay the down from the previous line of scrimmage.
- Offensive player with possession beyond the line of scrimmage – offense chooses whether to replay the down from the previous line of scrimmage or they can put the ball in play where it was declared dead.
- **NOTE:** any accepted penalty nullifies inadvertent whistle option.

Scoring

It is a touchdown when a runner advances from the field of play so that the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line. It is a touchdown when a loose ball is caught by a player while the ball is on or behind the opponent's goal line.

- Touchdown 6 points
- Safety 2 points
- PAT (3 yds.) 1 point
 - This attempt can also be kicked from the goal line (20 yds from the field goal posts), unblocked. A maximum of a 5 yard runup will be allowed, and only a holder will be on the field of play during the attempt.
- PAT (10 yds.) 2 points
- PAT (20 yds.) 3 points
- PAT's are blown dead on turnover

After the PAT attempt is completed, the ball will be placed at the 15 yard line for the opposing team's possession.
THERE ARE NO KICKOFFS!

Mercy Rule

- If a team is ahead by 25 or more points with 5 minutes left in the game, the game is over. If a team scores during the last 5 minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 25 or more points, the game is over.

Intentional Downing

This play is a way to legally stop the clock.

- Spiking the ball.
 - The QB may take the snap and immediately spike the ball into the ground.
 - S/he must spike the ball at his/her feet.
 - They must not delay this action in any way.

Punting the Ball

On fourth down, the referee will ask the offensive team captain to select if they wish to 1) Punt or 2) Try to reach the zone-line-to-gain. Once a decision is reached, the referee will announce the decision to the defense. If the offense declares a punt (or decided to "go for it"), then wants to change their decision, they must do so after a charged timeout or an accepted penalty in which the down is replayed.

- Fake or Quick kicks are not permitted at any time.
 - Penalty: Illegal kicking, 10yds from previous spot.
- The punter must receive the ball like any other snap (at least two yards behind the line of scrimmage).
 - Penalty: Illegal procedure, 5yds from previous spot.
- The kicking team must have a minimum of four (4) players on the line of scrimmage. The receiving team has no rules on the number of players on the line of scrimmage.
 - Penalty: Illegal procedure, 5yds from previous spot.
- Neither team may advance past the line of scrimmage until the ball has been punted. The receiving team may shuffle their players as they wish at any time.
 - Penalty: Illegal procedure, 5yds from previous spot.
- The kicking team may down the ball after it is punted to maximize field position, but must first allow the receiving team the opportunity to make the catch.
 - Fair Catch: During any punt, the kicking team members must allow receivers an attempt to make a play on the ball. The kicking team shall not obstruct their path to the ball. This applies even if a fair catch is not signaled and opponents have not yet touched the ball.
 - Penalty: 10 yards from previous spot and replay of the down OR choose an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 10 yard penalty from the spot of the foul.
- Punts that have not touched a player are NOT dead. When a punt touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, it is dead at that spot and belongs to the receiving team.
 - If a punt is muffed by the receiving team and caught in the air by the kicking team it is dead at that spot and the kicking team retains possession, first and line-to-gain.
 - If the muffed punt is caught in the air by the receiving team, they may advance the ball.
 - If the muffed punt touches the ground, the ball is dead. If in the end zone, this is a touchback.
- If the punt extends beyond the back of the end zone, the ball is dead and will be placed on the **10 yard line**. Punts received in the end zone may be advanced.
- Momentum Rule - A player who is attempting to catch a punted ball, whose momentum carries them into the end zone, may advance the ball forward or down the ball while in the end zone for a touchback.

Flag Rules

- Players of opposing teams are encouraged to wear contrasting colored jerseys and flags.
- No article of clothing may cover any portion of the player's flag. One warning to each team.
- Each player on the field must wear the flag belt provided by the RecSports program. Belt must be properly attached at waistline - one flag center back and one flag over each hip.

- Legal tag: If a player has inadvertently lost their flag belt, then a one (1) hand tag between the shoulder and knees constitutes a “tackle”.
- Removing flag belt: When the belt is clearly taken from the ball carrier, the down shall end and the ball is declared dead. The belt should be held over the head to assist officials with the call. If belt is missing from the runner and not inadvertently lost, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage and penalty assessed.
- Contact: In an attempt to remove the belt from a ball carrier, defensive players may contact the body and shoulder of an opponent with their hands, but not their opponents face or any part of the neck or head. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the ball carrier down in an attempt to remove the flag.
- All players must have their flags in legal position at the start of each play. Penalty: Illegal equipment.
- Subs in uniform: Each sub shall be in uniform and ready to play upon entering the game. Penalty: Delay of game.
- Intentionally pulling or removing a belt from any player that does not have possession of the ball is illegal.
- Flag guarding: Ball carriers shall not guard their flags in a manner that would prevent an opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt. A ball carrier may not use straight arm tactics, swing arm to deflect, or use other means to keep an opponent from pulling a flag. This style of running constitutes flag guarding.
- A ball carrier may not lower his/her head or run in a bent over fashion, which hinders an opponent from pulling a flag, this style of running constitutes flag guarding with the intent to injure another.
- Obstruction of ball carrier: The defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct forward progress of a ball carrier when in the act of removing the belt or making a legal tag. Penalty: 10 yards.

Penalties

Penalty during try for point:

- Penalty on defense:
 - If the attempt was unsuccessful, add the penalty enforcement and replay the down.
 - If the attempt was successful, the play stands.
- Penalty on offense:
 - If the attempt was unsuccessful, then the play is over and the attempt will not be repeated.
 - If the attempt was successful, then take the converted score away add the penalty enforcement.

Enforcement philosophies

- Penalties behind the line of scrimmage:
 - By the offense – enforce from the spot of the foul
 - By the defense – enforce from the line of scrimmage
- Penalties beyond the line of scrimmage
 - After a player already has possession of the ball
 - By the offense – enforce from spot of the foul.
 - By the defense – enforce from the end of the run.
 - Before a player has possession of the ball
 - By the offense – enforce from the line of scrimmage
 - By the defense – enforce from the line of scrimmage.

5 Yard Penalties

- Illegal equipment
- Delay of game
- Substitution infraction
- Encroachment (*dead ball*)
- False start (*dead ball*)
- Illegal snap (*dead ball*)
- Illegal formation - 4 players not on line - offense
- Player not within 15 yards of the ball

10 Yard Penalties

- Running play after declaring punt
- Fair catch interference
- Two or more consecutive encroachments (2nd is 10 yards)
- Offensive pass interference - **(LOSS OF DOWN)**
- Defensive pass interference – (automatic 1st down)
- Illegally secured belt on touchdown (**LOSS OF DOWN**, no score)
- Unsportsmanlike conduct (i.e. – taunting or excessive celebration)
- Spiking, kicking, throwing ball during a dead ball
- Attempt to steal or hit the football from the hands of an opponent
- Tripping
- Contact with opponent on ground
- Throwing runner to the ground
- Hurdling player
- Unnecessary contact
- Tackling
- Clipping
- Roughing the passer – (automatic 1st down) – any contact with the QB shall be considered roughing
- Illegal blocking
- Obstruction or holding of the runner
- Flag guarding
- Illegal participation
- Illegal flag belt removal

Disqualification associated with certain 10 yard penalties (loss of down or automatic 1st down)

- Intentionally kicking or attempting to strike an opposing player or official.
- Unsportsmanlike player / coach / bench conduct - verbal or physical abuse of an official, player, coach, or bench.
- Tackling or throwing a player to the ground.
- Intentional tampering with the flag belt (offense or defense)

Miscellaneous

- **All officials' calls are final!**
- The scorekeeper's record is the official record. Scorekeepers will be responsible for keeping score and penalties.