

## **Warren County YMCA - Flag Football Rules 2023**

**The Warren County YMCA is a proponent of good sportsmanship and fair play. Winning is not the goal of YMCA sports. Winning in our programs is secondary to the experience the kids have playing and learning a sport. Coaches or parents who do not have the same philosophy should consider joining another league. The YMCA will not compromise its philosophy for over enthusiastic adults.**

### **Code of Conduct**

- 1. Coaches WILL be a good example of sportsmanship and fair play.**
- 2. Parents are responsible for their own actions. Inappropriate comments or behavior from parents may result in a team penalty or in extreme cases may result in forfeiture of the game.**
- 3. Players are also responsible for their own actions. Players must adhere to all rules. Players must respect fellow teammates, coaches, officials and all rules.**
- 4. Positive reinforcement in YMCA sports is not an option, it's a REQUIREMENT.**

### **Flag Football Terms/Vocabulary (Field)**

**Boundary Lines: The outer perimeter lines around the field, including the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.**

**Offense: The team who has possession of the ball and is trying to advance to the opponent's endzone for a touchdown.**

**Defense: The team who doesn't have possession of the ball and is trying to prevent the other team from scoring by pulling the ball-carrier's flags down/off.**

**End Zone: The two endzones, located on opposite sides of the field, are scoring areas. The goal line, which a player must cross to score a touchdown, is the start of the endzone.**

**No Run Zone: No run zones in flag football are areas of the field located 5 yards before each goal line. If the ball is spotted within a no run zone, the offensive team must use a pass play to earn a touchdown. The objective is to prevent power football in tight spaces, limiting contact, and limiting potential injuries.**

**Line-to-Gain:** The line the offensive team must cross to get a first down, or to score.

**Line of Scrimmage:** This is an imaginary line that expands the width of the field and runs through the point of the football. It indicates where teams can't cross until the play has begun.

**Backfield:** The part of the field directly behind the line of scrimmage.

### **Flag Football Terms/Vocabulary (Game)**

**Dead Ball:** This refers to the period of time directly before or after the play, when the ball is not in motion. Dead Balls commonly happen when the ball touches the ground, the ball-carrier's flag is pulled from their belt, the ball carrier steps out of bounds, the ball carrier's body (outside of their hands or feet) touches the ground, the pass (forward or backward "lateral") is incomplete, or there is a bad snap to start the play where the ball hits the ground and the quarterback cannot pick the ball up in time.

**Live Ball:** This is the period of time when the ball and play is in motion. It is generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are enforced before the down is considered complete.

**Downs:** A down is the period after the ball is snapped and the team is attempting to advance down the field. In flag football rules, teams have 4 downs to cross midfield. Once crossing midfield, teams will have 4 more downs to try and score.

**Lateral:** A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier. Laterals are allowed but must not be a forward lateral after passing the line of scrimmage.

**Passer:** The passer is the player throwing the ball. The passer is not necessarily always the quarterback.

**Rush Line:** An imaginary line running across the width of the field, 7 yards from the line of scrimmage on the defensive side of the ball. This line will be marked by an official with a cone.

**Rusher:** The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass. Rushers must line up behind the Rush Line to be eligible to rush the quarterback. Offensive players must steer clear of the rusher. When the ball is handed off, any defender may rush. This term is also known as "Blitzing".

**Screen Blocking:** Legally obstructing an offensive player without contacting them with any part of the screen blockers body. Screen blockers arms must either be fully extended down to the ground (below the waist), or to their sides. We will allow hands to be up in front of the blocker's chest with bent arms and open palms for protection. Once the ball is snapped, the screen blocker(s) can take 1 step backwards to get set, then can only move 2-3 steps laterally to either side (Right/Left) to (screen) an oncoming rusher.

**Flag Guarding:** This term takes place when the ball-carrier prevents a defender from pulling down their flags. For example: they might stiff arm, cover the flag with their hand, lower an elbow to block a pull attempt, or swat at a defender's hands. This is illegal to do and will result in a penalty.

**Interceptions/Intercepted Passes:** Happens when the passer makes a pass which is caught by a defensive player. The ball remains live and may be returned for points. Interceptions are also allowed on PATs (Point After Touchdown Attempts) and can be returned for 2 points.

**Fumbles:** There are no fumbles in this league. Once the ball hits the ground, it is considered a dead ball.

**Point After Touchdown Attempts:** Play starts at the mark on the 7-yard line (just behind the no rush zone) after a touchdown is scored. Teams can do either of the following for extra points: 1 Point for a rushing touchdown or 2 points for a passing touchdown. 1 attempt is made at a PAT, unless the defensive team commits a foul.

**Safety:** A safety occurs when the ball becomes dead in a team's own end zone, the player with the ball steps out of bounds while in the endzone, or the offensive team commits a foul in their endzone. 2 points and possession are then rewarded to the defensive team.

**Punting:** "Punting" may occur on a 4<sup>th</sup> down if a 1<sup>st</sup> down has not yet been reached. A coach will instruct the game official that they would like to "punt" the ball. The official will move the ball to the other team's 5-yard line as a change of possession.

**Snapping:** When the center hands or tosses the football between their legs to the quarterback, thus beginning the down/play.

## **Main Objectives for the Season**

- 1. To introduce players to the game of football.**
- 2. For players to have fun and have a memorable experience.**
- 3. For players to understand the basic rules/fundamentals of the sport to the point that they will want to return to and continue to play the sport again.**
- 4. For players to learn new skills including: Passing/Throwing, Rushing/Running with the ball, Flag Pulling, Offensive/Defensive Positions, Coordination (Hand-Eye/Foot), Basic Game Rules, Out of Bounds Rules, Penalties, Teamwork and much more.**
- 5. To improve skills as they are learned in fun and demonstrative ways.**
- 6. For players to understand good sportsmanship towards other players, coaches and officials.**
- 7. For players to play in every single game/not excluding any players during games or practices/activities.**

## **Starting the Game**

- 1. After warmups, at official game start time, teams will be asked by an official to line up on the mid-field line to do the YMCA Sports Pledge.**
- 2. After the pledge, officials may quickly review rules/go over anything they may have seen the prior week.**
- 3. Players will be checked for tucked in shirts, proper flag belts, and shoes/cleats will be checked.**
- 4. Coaches will select 1-2 captains each game.**
- 5. A coin toss will determine which team is receiving or defending at the beginning of each game. Teams will start opposite to begin the second half.**
- 5. No kickoffs. Each team will start at their own 5-yard line to begin each new drive.**

## **Length of Game**

- 1. Two 20-minute halves, with a 5-minute halftime. There will be a running clock throughout the game. The clock will only stop for an official's time out, an injury, halftime, or team time-outs.**
- 2. Time-outs: Each team gets 1 60-second time-out per half. This will stop the game clock. Unused time outs will not carry over to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.**
- 3. Play-Clock: Teams will have 40 seconds in between plays. The ball must be put into play promptly and legally within the 40-second clock before it expires. Any action or lack there of by either team that tends to prevent this is considered a delay of game. This includes: Interrupting the 40-second count for any reason except for a granted time-out, consuming more than 40**

**seconds before snapping the ball after it is ready to play or deliberately trying to delay the clock by any means to benefit your team.**

- 4. Overtime: This season, we will not run overtime periods. If the game ends after regulation in a tie, the game will be over. This is to prevent schedule issues/late starting times for other games and allow us to stay relatively on schedule.**

### **Scoring**

- 1. Touchdown = 6 pts.**
- 2. Extra point run = 1pt. Extra point pass = 2 pts. Extra point tries (PATs) will start from the 7-yard line (marked on the field). \* Any penalties on a PAT will result in the following: Penalty on the offense will be treated as a loss of down and the PAT will conclude. A penalty on the defense will result in another PAT attempt if the PAT was not scored. If the PAT was scored, the penalty is cancelled and the score is recorded.**
- 3. Safety = 2 pts. After a safety the ball will be brought to the 5 yd line to be reset and played (similar to a change of possession after a touchdown). Possession will be awarded to the team who scored the safety.**

### **Playing Field**

- 1. The playing field will be 50 yards long x 30 yards wide with 7-yard end zones. The total field size is 64 yards x 30 yards.**
- 2. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power running plays. The 5-yard zones before midfield and before the end zones are "No-Run Zones". Only pass plays are allowed when the play starts inside these zones. These zones are marked with a different color on the field.**
- 3. A line will be marked on the 7-yard line that is used for all PATs.**
- 4. The midfield line (25-yard line) will be the only 1<sup>st</sup> down line.**

### **Practices**

- 1. Coaches are responsible to set their own practice times. Check with the YMCA Youth Program Director (Ben) to determine availability of YMCA fields.**

### **Equipment**

- 1. Junior size footballs for 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> will be used. Pee Wee size footballs for 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> will be used. Coaches will be provided with practice balls.**
- 2. Flags, pennies, cones, etc. will also be provided by the YMCA.**
- 3. Players are prohibited from wearing any protective devices under their clothing.**
- 4. Players must wear rubber cleats or tennis shoes.**

5. Mouthpieces are allowed and are recommended (accidental contact is always possible).
6. Shirts must be tucked into pants or shorts.
7. Flag belts must be wrapped or tucked in with flags completely visible. Please make sure your players are wearing the correct size belt.

### **General Rules**

1. This year, our leagues are 7v7. 5v5 will be allowed if we don't have enough kids.
2. Teams need at least 7 players to start the game (if less kids show up, we will play less).
3. All players **MUST** play the same amount of time in each game. It is encouraged to play kids on offense and defense. Let all players play multiple positions. All kids need to touch the ball and play multiple positions throughout the game. (ex. same kid cannot be quarterback all game)
4. All games will be played at the Warren County YMCA on Saturday mornings.
5. There will be no weather-related cancellations unless weather is extreme/severe (extreme rain/high wind/thunder/lightning/extreme temperatures/weather warnings/ etc). This will be Ben's call.

### **Defensive Rules**

1. The defensive player must pull a flag on the belt in order to stop the ball carrier. Players should hold up the flag belt at the point they pulled it to help the official determine spot of ball.
2. If the ball carrier or receiver loses the flag belt (falls off) before they possess the ball, the ball is deemed dead at the spot they gain possession of the ball. If a ball carrier loses the flag belt while in possession of the ball, the ball is deemed dead at the spot in which the flag falls off (similar to if they were pulled by a defender). Defenders **DO NOT** need to touch the player after they lose their flags in order for the play to be stopped.
3. Rushers & The Rush Line: Only players who line up **BEHIND** the rush line are allowed to rush the quarterback. A referee will mark where this line is with a cone before every play to help players identify where the line is located. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play. The Rush line will be 7 yards off of the line of scrimmage.
4. A legal rush is any rush started from behind the 7-yard rush line, or from anywhere on the field **AFTER** the ball has been handed off or passed by the quarterback. **ONLY** the rushers can go after the quarterback. (Quarterbacks cannot run past the line of scrimmage and **MUST** hand off or pass the ball to another player)

5. If the offense draws a rusher to jump the 7-yard rushing line then snaps the ball before they can get back to the line, that defensive player cannot rush the quarterback.
6. Once the quarterback passes or hands off the ball, any defender can rush the player with possession to pull their flags.
7. Defensive players may use their hands to work their way to the ball carrier.
8. Defense cannot hold on to the ball carriers clothing in order to grab a flag.
9. Intentional tackling will result in suspension from the game. This does not include players getting their feet tangled up. There **MUST** be a legitimate attempt to pull the flag.
10. Defensive players cannot line up over center.
11. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
12. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carriers possession at any time (remember **NO** fumbles). Go for the flags.
13. Interceptions are allowed and CAN be returned for a touchdown.
14. One coach is allowed on the field.

#### **Offensive Rules**

1. The quarterback cannot directly run the ball (QB sneak or designed QB run). The quarterback can hand the ball off or pass it. If the quarterback hands the ball off, the quarterback then becomes eligible for a backwards lateral, or can run down field as a receiver.
2. If the quarterback is in trouble and being chased by rushers, they can only run as far up as the line of scrimmage, but no farther to avoid loss of yardage on a sack.
3. All players are eligible receivers or runners including the center.
4. No center sneaks. The ball must be snapped to another player first.
5. Passes from behind line of scrimmage only.
6. No forward laterals.
7. Flag Guarding - No stiff-arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, shoulder or ball or intentionally covering the flags with players shirt to avoid flags being pulled.
8. There are no fumbles, the ball is dead as soon as it hits the ground, except on the snap. If the ball is snapped then fumbled, the quarterback may pick it up and continue the play. If the ball hits the ground in the back field and the play is deemed dangerous, the referee will blow the play dead. The ball will be placed at the spot of the fumble on the next play and the next down will be played.
9. Ball is dead if carrier's knee hits the ground.
10. Only one player in motion at a time. **MUST** be set 1-second prior to the snap.
11. There must be at least 4 players on the line of Scrimmage (7v7) at the time of snap. (3 on the line of scrimmage for 5v5)

12. Four downs to get to the first down mark.
13. Only Screen blocking is allowed by offensive players. A description is available in the upcoming Blocking/Screen Blocking Section.
14. One coach is allowed on the field.

### **Punting**

There is no Punting, if you get to fourth down and would like to "punt" the ball. The opposing team will start with the ball on their own 5-yard line.

### **Line Play**

Remember, new this year, only the Rushers behind the rush line are allowed to rush the quarterback. Once the quarterback passes/hands off the ball, everyone can rush the ball carrier. With that said, defensive line players cannot rush the quarterback at the start of play. Their job is to defend offensive line players as they will be eligible for a pass.

(Defense) Any player directly opposite the center must be 3 yards off the nose of the ball AND 3 yards down the line.

All other players, not directly over the center, must be at least 2 yards off the line of Scrimmage.

### **Blocking/Screen Blocking**

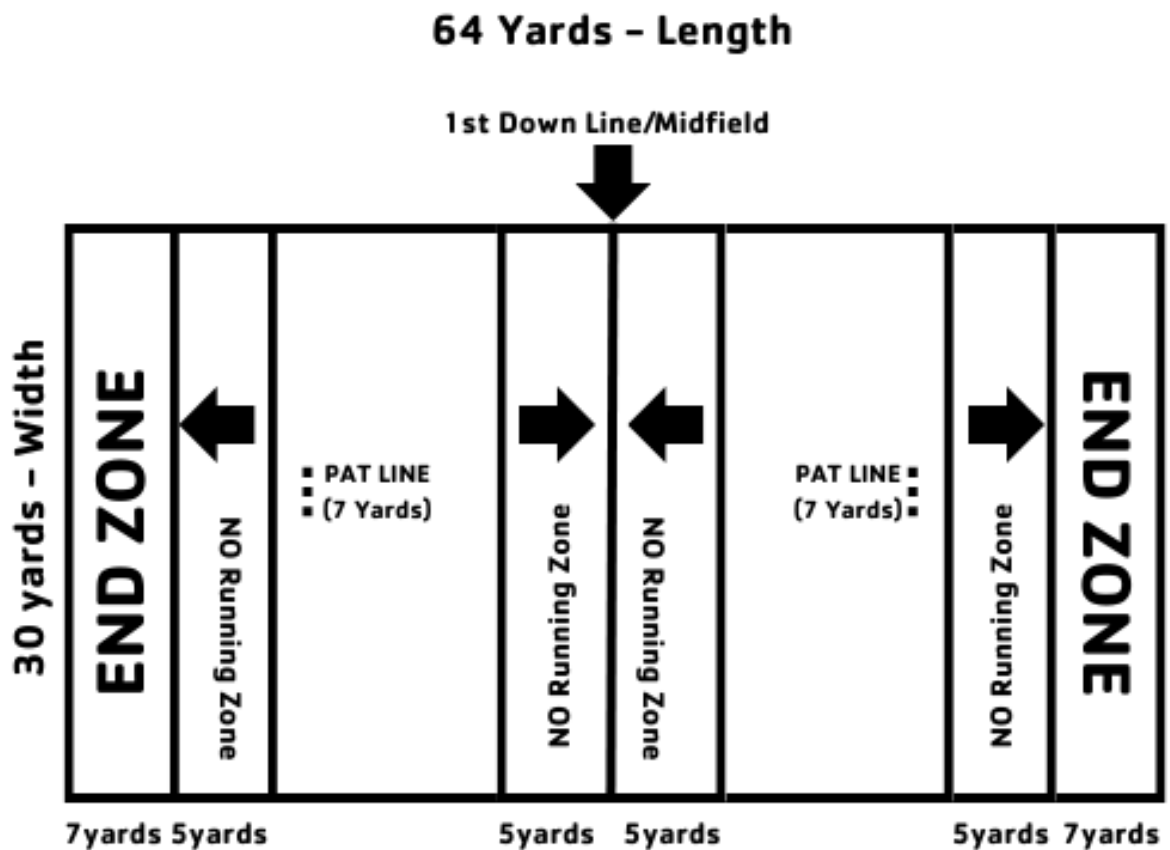
1. Traditional blocking is no longer allowed, to avoid potential injuries.
2. **Screen Blocking** – is legally obstructing an offensive player without contacting them with any part of the screen blockers body. Screen blockers arms must either be fully extended down to the ground (below the waist), or to their sides. We will allow hands to be up in front of the blocker's chest with bent arms and open palms for protection.
3. Any use of arms, elbows, legs, or shoulders to initiate contact during the screen block is illegal. No extended arms can be used, and no pushing defensive players is allowed.
4. No contact can be made below the flag belt, or to the face.
5. Once the ball is snapped, the screen blocker(s) can take 1 step backwards to get set, then can only move 2-3 steps to either side (Right/Left) to (screen) an oncoming rusher. This is the only movement allowed as it is up to the quarterback to scramble away from a rusher if they get by the screen blocker.
6. The Rusher has the right of way to the ball carriers or quarterbacks' flags, BUT once the screen blocker is set, the Rusher's responsibility is to go around the offensive player to avoid contact. The rusher cannot push directly through defenders, they must go around. Screen blockers are meant to make the rush slightly tougher on the defense.
7. 2-point set stances only.
8. **Downfield Blocking** – A basketball style (non-moving) screen is the only acceptable form of downfield blocking we will allow. Blockers may not run in



between a rusher/defender and the ball carrier impeding a defenders' right of way or progress to the carriers' flags.

### Referees

1. Referees' calls are final whether coaches agree with them or not. Some calls will be made on an "advantage gained" basis. Abusive arguing results in being removed from the game, potential termination from league and potential legal ramifications.
2. Referees WILL miss calls, it happens. Referees will also let some calls go so the game can flow and each team gets as many snaps of the ball in the hour as possible. (ex. A Hold on the far left side of the line and the ball carrier runs around the right side of the line.) If it doesn't affect the play, it may not get called in order to keep the game moving.



## PENALTIES

1. Referees will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage , except as noted. (Spot Fouls)
4. Coaches may ask referees questions about the rules but may not argue. Players may not question calls.
5. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
7. Spot fouls in the end zone: Defensive (ball on 1-yard line, First Down)/Offensive (Safety)

### DEFENSIVE SPOT FOULS

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic First Down
Holding	+5 Yards and automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> Down
Stripping (Taking ball from ball carrier)	+5 Yards and automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> Down

### OFFENSIVE SPOT FOULS

Illegal Blocking	-5 Yards and loss of down
Charging	-5 Yards and loss of down
Flag Guarding	-5 Yards and loss of down

### DEFENSIVE PENALTIES

Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	+10yards and automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> Down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	+10yards and automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> Down
Offside/Illegal Substitution	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> down
Illegal Rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> down
Illegal Flag Pull	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> down
Roughing the Passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> down

### OFFENSIVE PENALTIES

Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
False Start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Offside/Illegal Substitution	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Forward Pass (Throwing a pass after crossing line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Motion (More than 1 person moving/not set)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of Game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down