

## **2018 Southwest Michigan Rocket Football Rules**

The following rules have been discussed and agreed upon by all of the communities in the Southwest Michigan Rocket Football League. If you have any questions concerning rules, see your community league director for any clarifications. All referees should have a copy of these rules well in advance of any game. These rules are set up in such a way to provide a safe, fair, and fun learning experience for all of those involved in Rocket Football. If at any time you observe any of these rules not being followed, please contact your community director.

***Southwest Michigan Rocket Football League will use MHSAA football rules.***

**The following are rule variations that have been adopted specifically for this league.**

### **Section I: *Equipment and Facilities***

A. Every player must be equipped with the following:

- 1) Gym shoes, soccer shoes, or football shoes with rubber cleats that are no more than 5/8" long. Metal cleats of any kind are NOT allowed.
  - 2) Shoulder Pads
  - 3) Football Helmet with face guard that meets playing standards.
  - 4) Pants with knee, thigh, hip and kidney pads. Pads do not have to conform to MHSAA regulations.
  - 5) Mouth guard. The mouth guard must be attached to the helmet unless the player is using a prescribed orthodontic mouth device. If not attached, the player must leave the field of play until the mouth guard is legally in place. The mouth guard should be in place when the offensive team breaks the huddle. If not in place when the team takes a set position, the official will enforce a 5 yard penalty.
  - 6) All equipment should be checked by each community before distributing.
- B. If teams jerseys are the same color, the home team will provide and wear pullover vests of a different color.
- C. Football: Minor teams must use a junior size football ball. Major teams will use a youth size football. All teams will use the same brand of football for games.

### **Section II: *Practices***

- A. Teams may have a maximum of **8 full contact practice** sessions before the first game. This change from 10 is to limit contact for safety. Pre-season practices will be limited to 120 minutes per session. Full contact practices can begin 1 month prior to the first game. Example: If first game is September 16<sup>th</sup> then practices can begin on August 16<sup>th</sup>.
- B. After the first game, teams may have three (3) practices per week consisting of 90 minutes per practice, or two (2) practices per week of 120 minutes per practice.
- C. Non-contact sessions or non-contact camps are not counted as practice.
- D. No two- a-day practices are permitted.

## **Section II: Practices (continued)**

E. All community programs will adopt the MHSAA policy for Managing Heat & Humidity. Each community may decide to adopt a more stringent policy, lowering the temperature for practice cancellation, for example. The MHSAA policy includes cancellation of practices and games if the Heat Index is above 104 degrees and no equipment practices when the Heat Index is 99 to 104 degrees. It is recommended that equipment be removed when not involved in contact if Heat Index is 95 to 99 degrees.

F. All communities will comply with the Michigan Sports Concussion Law, which includes mandatory concussion awareness through an on-line training program for coaches, a signed statement from parents acknowledging receipt of educational materials and written clearance from a health professional for any player suspected of sustaining a concussion.

## **Section III: Participants**

A. All participants must be registered and have a signed permission slip and birth certificate on file with their league director or coach before practicing or playing in a game.

B. Each community league will keep registration information with participant's name and birth date on file with league director or coach.

C. Head coaches will provide an official league approved roster to the opposing coach before the game that has been signed by the coach and community league director. The roster will contain the following information: player name, number, birth date, and age. Only players on the official roster may play.

D. League age and restrictions: League age determined by player's age on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

**MINOR: AGES 8-9, See Rule concerning 7\* and 10\*\* year olds below.**

**MAJOR: AGES 10-12\*\*\***

**\* 7 YEAR OLDS ARE ALLOWED TO PLAY IN MINOR LEAGUE.**

**Must be approved by community league director.**

**OLDER/LIGHTER RULE: \*\*10 YEAR OLDS MAY PLAY IN MINOR LEAGUE BUT MUST WEIGH**

**LESS THAN 70 LBS WITHOUT EQUIPMENT AND CANNOT ADVANCE THE BALL ON OFFENSE.**

**Players will be weighed to determine minor league eligibility as soon as the program starts by the League Director. Players will be marked with a special color tape.**

**\*\*\*12 YEAR OLDS MUST BE IN 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE OR LOWER.**

E. Weight Restrictions with Full Equipment:

1) Mandatory weigh in for all teams. Home team will provide scale that is to be used for all weigh-ins. At least one coach from each team must be present before weigh in can start. No bathroom scales allowed. Scale must be placed on a hard and flat surface.

2) **Players are only allowed to weigh in once per day.** Once a game has begun it will not be stopped to weigh a participant. If a player arrives after kickoff, they may play as an overweight player and then weigh in at halftime.

### **Section III: *Participants (continued) ~ The Following weights are with equipment.***

3) A player that is over 115 pounds in the Minor league and a player that is over 135 pounds in the Major league may NOT advance the ball under any circumstance. It is required that all players exceeding the weight limit for advancement of the ball are identified by a mark of visible tape placed on their helmet from front to back prior to the start of the game.

4) Minor league players weighing more than 115 pounds are restricted to playing on the line from tackle to tackle.

5) Major league players weighing more than 135 pounds are restricted to playing on the line from tackle to tackle.

\*A taped player may punt, kickoff and attempt kick field goals and extra points.

6) Unbalanced line requirements: If a team lines up in an unbalanced line where the center is the last player on the end, the center will be an eligible receiver as long as he reports to the official and meets the weight restrictions for ball advancement. Although the center will be an eligible receiver, teams may only play up to two overweight players to the left or right of the center on the line of scrimmage depending on the unbalanced line direction. The defense may line up two overweight players to the left and right of the center or 4 overweight players from the center to the next player on the line.

F. There are to be no compromises regarding weight and age restrictions except for very special circumstances agreed to unanimously on an individual basis by the SMRF community directors. Any coach not abiding by the weight rules will receive a 15 yard penalty and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> offense will be suspended from the game.

G. Players must warm up before each game. A mandatory 3 minute warm up will take place after the 7 minute halftime talk.

H. Every player must play at least four (4) plays per half. Kickoffs and punts do not count as a play. Failure to comply with this rule could lead to the expulsion of the coach.

I. If play has stopped for an injured player, that player must leave the game for at least one play. The head coach must approve re-entry before player is allowed to return.

J. All players moving from Minor to Major League will go into a draft. Once on a Minor or Major team, players may stay together the following season.

### **Section IV: *Game Rules***

MHSAA rules apply with the following exceptions. Officials are expected to abide by the following rule modifications for the Southwest Michigan Rocket Football League and report any problems to the field director.

A. At least one registered official and field director must be present for a game to begin. A minimum of two officials should be on the field. In the event of unforeseen circumstances and if both coaches are in agreement, a game can be played without a registered official. The home team's program is responsible for paying referees.

## Section IV: *Game Rules (continued)*

B. The first game should begin approximately at 9:00 A.M., unless otherwise noted. The following games will start approximately at 2 hour intervals. Every effort should be made to keep the games moving efficiently. Playing facilities must be accessible 45 minutes prior to the start of the game.

C. Games will consist of four (4) ten (10) minute quarters. Time is kept based on MHSAA rules. The halftime shall be 7 Minutes, with the clock being re-set for a mandatory three (3) minute warm-up. Timers should be familiar with MHSAA clock management rules and referee signals.

D. A mercy rule will go into effect any time during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half when either team has a lead of 35 points or more. At that time, the game clock will run continuously until the margin is reduced to less than 35 points or until the game ends except for TIPS (Timeouts, injuries, penalties or scores.) At any time during the game when either team has a led of 21 points or more, the score will not be changed on the scoreboard until the margin is reduced to less than 21 points. The score will be kept in the booth. The final score will be posted on the scoreboard at the end of the game. **The clock may run continuously at any point during the game if both coaches are in agreement.**

E. Teams will have 30 seconds to snap the ball after the referee signals ball ready for play. Coaches will receive a warning for violation and then the result will be delay of game.

F. Two coaches from each team are permitted on the playing field for the minor league and one coach for the major league. A coach is allowed on the field during special teams. Coaches must remain 15 yards behind the line of scrimmage when the huddle breaks. This rule must also be observed in a no huddle offense. Coaching will stop at the snap of the ball.

### G. SPECIAL TEAMS:

1) All punts, kicking the point after touch down, and field goals must be announced. Kicking and receiving teams must be set until the ball is kicked. The ball must be kicked from a point at least 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage and in between the tackles. No rushing is allowed. When kicking a field goal or PAT both teams on the line must be in a 3 or 4 point stance when the ball is kicked.

#### 2) Point After Touchdown:

Kicking an extra point = 2 points      Successful run or pass to end zone = 1 point

3) When punting in the Minor League, the option to punt or place the ball 20 yards from the spot of the ball will be given. If inside the 40 yard line, the ball will be placed half the distance to the goal line.

4) No kickoffs allowed in the Minor League. Teams will take possession at their own 35 yard line to start the game, to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half and after scores.

5) Kickoffs must be kicked using a regulation kicking tee.

6) Kick receiving team must have at least 5 players between the 45 and 50 yard line and kickoff team must be spread out from sideline to sideline.

H. No ring neck tackling is allowed outside the free blocking zone (3 yards either side of the line of scrimmage from tackle to tackle). Ring neck tackling is defined as any tackle made by grasping the runner **above** shoulder pads. Referee discretion.

- I. The center is allowed to turn the ball parallel to the line of scrimmage in order to snap it.
- J. No defender will be allowed to line up over the center in the Minor League. This area consists of the distance from outside shoulder to outside shoulder.
- K. Visiting team no shows will pay a fee of \$100 to cover referee expenses.
- L. No defensive player may advance towards the line of scrimmage before the snap of the ball. Standing defensive players lined up tackle to tackle must be a minimum of 3 yards off the ball. 1<sup>st</sup> offense: Warning, additional offenses: 5 yard encroachment penalty
- M. All offensive and defensive lineman, tackle to tackle, must be in a 3 or 4 point stance. Ends can be in a standing position or 3 point stance. Once set, they are not allowed to move until the ball is snapped, this includes any lateral movement. There is no shifting, jumping or movement to simulate the start of play. Any of these activities will result in a penalty.
- N. Field coaches, head coach in the field box and players may call time out.
- O. If a player's helmet comes off during play, the play will be whistled dead and the player comes off the field for one play.
- P. If a coach is ejected from a game by an official for any reason they are suspended for the rest of that game plus the next two games. If the ejection occurs at the end of the season the suspension carries over to the next season.
- Q. Team size is limited to 35 players on the roster.

## **Section V: Miscellaneous**

- A. League rules may be changed at any time by a majority vote of the Southwest Michigan Rocket Football League community directors.
- B. No venue may charge for admission or parking for a league game without prior notification to both teams.

***It is very important that these rules are distributed to all involved with Southwest Michigan Rocket Football. The rules must be followed strictly to ensure safety and consistency at various playing locations. If you do not understand a rule please contact your community league director for clarification. Failure to comply with league rules could result in forfeiture of games or dismissal from league play.***