

# ***2018-2019***

## ***TCSAAL***

### ***Flag Football Rules***

**texascharter.rsportz.com**

#### **Brief Description of TCSAAL Flag Football:**

TCSAAL Flag Football is played 7 vs 7. The game is played similar to football, but with many exceptions as laid out in this rule book. The game is 40 minutes long with a running clock except for the final 2 minutes of each half. The game will start with a coin flip called in the air by the visiting team, to determine which team will kick or receive and which end zone each team will defend. The end zone each team defends will rotate at the half. Also, the team starting on offense at the start of the game will start on defense at the start of the second half. Each team's goal is to advance the ball down the field in order to cross the endzone and score touchdowns. After scoring a touchdown, the scoring team will choose to attempt either a 1-point conversion or a 2-point conversion.

After a score or at the start of the game or the start of the second half, teams will begin their next drive from their own 20-yard line.

Offenses can utilize passing or rushing plays in order to advance the ball, however teams are not allowed to use rushing plays when within their opponents No Rush Zone (within their opponent's goal-line and the 5-yard line). Note this does not include plays where the line of scrimmage is the 5-yard line (No Rush Zone exists only inside the 5-yard line).

The Quarterback is given a 5-second pass protection period at the start of each play to throw the ball. When the 5 seconds runs out or there is a pass / handoff of any kind to another player or the Quarterback advances the ball past the line of scrimmage, the defense will be allowed to rush the offense.

TCSAAL Flag Football is a non-contact sport that must utilize non-contact screen blocking. Screen blocking is only allowed on the line of scrimmage or behind the line. There is no down field screening. Players are "tackled" by pulling their opponent's flag(s). Offense has 4 downs to either gain a first down or score a touchdown.

1<sup>st</sup> downs are obtained by passing either of the 20-yard lines or the midfield line, regardless of where the drive began. If a team fails to score or get a first down on their first 3 attempts, they can choose to either go for it on 4<sup>th</sup> down or punt the ball. At the end of regulation, the team with the most points wins the game. In the event of a tie, the game will advance to overtime.

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# 1. Specifications

## Field

- The field of play measures 80 yards in length. There is a 10-yard endzone at each end of the field of play, making the field and endzone layout 100 total yards in length.
- The field of play’s width can vary within a certain range. Fields can be as narrow as 35 yards and as wide as 53.3 yards due to field availability.
- Teams are to assemble and lineup on opposite sides of the field.
  - The Home team will be assigned to the East or North (northeast) side of the field. The visiting team will be assigned the opposite side of the field.
  - Players and coaches are only permitted to congregate in between the two 20-yard markers.

### TCSAAL Approved Flag Football Field Diagram

**Length: 100 Yards**

**Width: Minimum 35 Yards – Maximum 53.3 Yards**

<b>Endzone (10 yards in length)</b>	<b>Goal Line</b>
<b>No Rush Zone When INSIDE the 5-yard line</b> <small>(Note: ball on 5-yard line is still allowed to be rushed. Play must be within the 5-yard line and the goal-line to not allow rushing)</small>	<b>5 yard line</b>
	<b>20 Yard Line</b>
	<b>40 Yard Line</b>
	<b>20 Yard Line</b>
	<b>5 Yard Line</b>
<b>No Rush Zone When INSIDE the 5-yard line</b> <small>(Note: ball on 5-yard line is still allowed to be rushed. Play must be within the 5-yard line and the goal-line to not allow rushing)</small>	<b>Goal Line</b>
<b>Endzone (10 yards in length)</b>	

## Ball

- Game balls must be of the following sizes:
  - 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade & 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade: TDY / Touchdown Youth / Size 8 / Ages 12-14
    - **(EXAMPLE: <https://www.dickssportinggoods.com/p/wilson-tdy-composite-youth-football/16wilytdycmpstythftb>)**
  - 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Grade & Varsity: TDS / Official / Size 9 / Ages 14 & Up
    - **(EXAMPLE: <https://www.dickssportinggoods.com/p/wilson-tds-traditional-leather-official-football-16wiluwlsnlthrtbftb/16wiluwlsnlthrtbftb>)**

- Game ball is to be provided by home team. However, both teams may use their own game balls for their own offensive plays, pending the approval of the officials. Both teams are responsible for providing their own balls for warm-ups.

## **Game Length / Timeouts / Overtime Length**

### **Game Length**

- Games consist of 40 total clock minutes.
- Games are divided into four quarters, each consisting of 10 minutes. Quarter will end, but teams will not switch sides at the end of the first and third quarters. Officials will announce the end of the quarter and game play will continue from the current spot.
- The game will use a running clock, with the exception of the last two minutes of the second and fourth quarters.
  - Officials are encouraged to notify teams when there are 5 minutes and 2 minutes remaining in each quarter. They will also notify teams when 30 seconds are remaining in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters. Failure to do so will not change result of game.
- Between halves, there will be a five-minute intermission.
  - In the event of overtime, there will be a three-minute intermission prior to the start of the overtime period.
  - There is no intermission between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> or between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters. Teams must stay on the field and the teams do not switch direction, however teams do switch direction at half.

### **Timeouts**

- Each team has two 60-second and one 30-second time-out per half. Unused time-outs from the 1<sup>st</sup> half do not carry over to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.
  - In the event of overtime, each team will be given one 30-second timeout per overtime period. Unused time-outs do not carry over from overtime period to overtime period.
- The game clock will be stopped for:
  - Team timeouts
    - The clock will restart upon the next legal snap or kickoff.
  - Touchdowns or safeties
    - The clock will restart upon the next legal snap following the conversion attempt.
  - Delay of Game penalties
  - Referee's timeouts
    - The clock will restart upon the referee's signal.
- In addition to the stoppage discussed, within the last two minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters, the game clock will be stopped for:
  - An incomplete pass. Clock restarts on next legal snap.
  - The ball carrier steps out-of-bounds. Clock restarts on next legal snap.
  - Any first down, including changes of possession, fair catches, and touchbacks. Clock restarts on next legal snap.
  - Penalty and administration. Clock restarts on either official's signal or next legal snap, depending on the previous play.

### **Overtime**

- Overtime begins with a coin toss, identical to the start of the game.
- Teams will start each overtime drive from their opponent's 10-yard line.
- Overtime occurs if both teams' scores are tied at the end of the fourth quarter.
- Overtime is not timed and ends under one of the following conditions:
  - The scores are unequal following each team's overtime drive.

- An interception is returned for a touchdown, as upon occurring, team scores cannot be equal following an overtime period
- There will be a maximum of three overtime periods per regular season game. If a regular season game is still tied after 3 overtime periods, the game will end in a tie.
  - Tie-breaker and playoff (regional and state tournament) games will play overtime periods until a winner is declared (regardless of how many overtime periods are necessary).
- Following the first overtime period, teams will alternate the order of ball possession.
  - For example, if a team who wins the coin toss at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> overtime period chooses to receive the ball for the first overtime drive, the first overtime drive in the 2<sup>nd</sup> overtime period (if necessary) will be given to the team losing the initial coin toss.
- Mercy Rule
  - **A vote will take place regarding the following to implement a mercy rule for Flag Football (see below). Only coaches in attendance will be eligible to vote on the issue.**
    - *If a team is up by at least 30 points in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, then the final 2 minutes of the game will be moved to a running clock. The clock will still stop in the final 2 minutes for timeouts, but not for any other circumstances. The game will go back to traditional time formats if the point differential falls under 30 points.*

## Officials

- There will be two officials assigned to each game.
- One official will act as the head official, while the other will act as the assistant.
- In any instance, the head official can overturn the assistant official's ruling.
- Officials keep official time and score for all games.
- Officials are to inform opposing team's coach of players arriving late if the late player's team was playing with less than 7 players when the late player arrived.
- Officials are to examine uniforms and flag belts for eligibility and compliance prior to game time.
- Officials are to inform teams when there is approximately two minutes remaining in each half (end of 2<sup>nd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> quarters).
- Officials will ask head coach on 4<sup>th</sup> down whether they will be kicking or running a play from scrimmage.
- Officials are to examine flag belts for compliance of scoring player following a successful score.
- Officials are to signal to the defense when the 5 seconds are up, ending the pass protection period. Officials shall count out loud the 5 seconds, then drop their hand to signify that the pass protection period has ended.

## Uniforms

Teams are required to wear uniforms that meet the following criteria:

### Coloring

- A jersey that is of similar color for every player on the team.
- The home team shall wear dark jerseys and pants/shorts, and the visiting team shall wear white or light jerseys and pants/shorts.
- If two teams wear colors too similar as deemed by the officials, the away team will be required to uniform themselves in an alternative color. If they do not have jerseys of an alternative color, the away team will need to provide and wear warm-ups or "pennies" to meet the uniform regulations.
- Off-color jerseys are allowed provided they do not cause complications at the sole discretion of officials.
  - For example, a team wearing yellow can uniform a teammate in orange, provided that it is approved by the officials.

- Neither jerseys nor pants/shorts are permitted to bear the same color as the flags themselves, as determined by the officials.

#### Jerseys & Numbering

- Jerseys require unique and correct numbering on the back of the jersey.
- In the event a team does not have enough jerseys for all of their players, teammates may alternate jerseys amongst themselves, however, the numbers always need to reflect the different player in said jersey.
  - For example, if two players are sharing a jersey, the number will need to be changed each time the jersey is exchanged between players. A player wearing an incorrect number at any time will be ruled ineligible.
    - The only exception to this rule exists in the event a visiting team is required to wear an alternate color at the start of the game, and that their only alternative jersey is a set of pullover jerseys.
    - Note, however, that the set of pullover jerseys used must otherwise satisfy the rules pertaining to their length.
- Numbers and players must match identically with official rosters submitted to TCSAAL.
- Jerseys must be either tucked into shorts and pants and must be underneath the flag belt at all times during play, or must be short enough so that they do not cover or hang over the flag belt in any way.
- Uniform jerseys with pockets are not allowed.

#### Pants/Shorts

- Pants or shorts must not bear any belt loops, drawstrings (can be tucked in), or any other loose material that might complicate officiating or deflagging, as determined by the officials.
- Pants or shorts cannot have pockets. If they have pockets, they must be taped shut and the pockets must be taped shut PRIOR TO GAME TIME.
- Pants/shorts that camouflage or resemble flag colors will not be permitted, as determined by the officials. Your flags cannot match your pants/shorts color.

#### Flags

- Teams are required to provide their own flags and flag belts.
- Flag belts must have at least two flags, one on each side that hang near the right and left hips.
- Flags must be a minimum of 12 inches in length, measured from the highest point of the flag belt down to the lowest point of the flag itself.
- TCSAAL Flags & Flag Belt Recommendations
  - TCSAAL does not regulate nor specify the brand or type of flag/flag belt that may be used during competition. However, TCSAAL would like to recommend the Triple Threat flags as well as the Sonic Boom flags. Both of these types are commonly used in TCSAAL league play. See below for some links where these flags may be purchased:
    - Triple Threat Flag Football Belt (below are just examples, not requirements)
      - <http://www.bsnsports.com/flag-football-belts>
      - <https://www.academy.com/shop/pdp/all-star%C2%AE-flag-football-belt>
    - Sonic Boom Flag Football Belt (below are just examples, not requirements)
      - <https://www.dickssportinggoods.com/p/flag-a-tag-42-sonic-boom-flag-football-belts-16ftgusncbmflgblftax/16ftgusncbmflgblftax>
      - <http://www.bsnsports.com/sonic-flag-belts>
- Flags must be unaltered from their purchased state.
  - The only exception to this rule exists in the instance that a flag belt has flags in addition to the two required, one on the right and one on the left hip of the player.
    - In this instance, players will be permitted to remove the additional flag(s), so long as the two on each side that hang near the right and left hips are left intact.

- For example, the commonly used “Triple Threat” flags have a 3rd flag positioned on the back of the belt that may be removed.
- All flags must be approved by officials before the game begins.
- Flag belts must completely encircle the wearing player’s waist.
- Players can only wear one flag belt at a time.
- Some standard flag belts may not fit all players. In the instance that a player is unable to wear a standard flag belt due to size, the player in question is still eligible to play without the flag but they cannot receive a pass. A player without a flag can still catch a tipped pass, but they are marked down at the point of reception. We do encourage teams to order oversized flag belts in these situations so the players can be eligible receivers. See below for some links where these over-sized flags may be purchased:
  - <http://www.bsnsports.com/sonic-flag-belts>
  - <https://www.dickssportinggoods.com/p/flag-a-tag-52-sonic-boom-flag-football-belts/16ftgusncbmlgbltfta>
- If a player’s waist is too big to encompass with a single flag belt, the player does not have to satisfy the flag uniform rules as detailed under uniforms section, and will be ruled ineligible as a ball carrier.
  - Teams can purchase larger-sized belts to make said players eligible; however, attaching multiple flag belts together in order to make one larger one is not permitted. Players with flag belts consisting of multiple belts attached to one-another will not be ruled eligible ball carriers.
- Any flag tampering at any time (other than exceptions listed above) is subject to penalty and ejection of the violating player.

### Jewelry

Absolutely no jewelry is permitted during play – this includes, but is not limited to:

- Earrings or other types of piercing jewelry.
- Any extra-uniform article or accessory of decor worn for the purpose of appearance, as determined by officials and/or TCSAAL administration.
- Any type of chain or pendant.
  - The following exceptions apply:
    - A medical bracelet that is taped down directly to the body.
    - Religious items that are taped down directly to the body.
- Players wearing jewelry during play will be subject to unsportsmanlike conduct, as well as potential ejection.

## **Eligibility**

- Players are expected to be familiar with and in compliance with all guidelines set forth in the TCSAAL Handbook.
- For a player to be eligible in accordance with the TCSAAL Handbook, he/she must be included on the participating team’s official roster which is to be submitted to TCSAAL administration at the end of the business day immediately prior to the day of the game.
- RSPortz rosters will lock as of October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Rosters will be final on this date and can no longer be altered to include additional players.
- Violations of this eligibility clause may be subject to penalties including but not limited to:
  - Suspension of ineligible player for a number of games as deemed appropriate by TCSAAL administration.
  - Suspension of ineligible player for the remainder of season (including playoffs).
  - Suspension of coach(es) for a number of games as deemed appropriate by TCSAAL administration.

- Suspension of coach(es) for the remainder of season (including playoffs).
- Forfeiture of game result.
- Forfeiture of season (including playoffs).
- Permanent suspension of player, coach, and/or campus.
  - Player eligibility is determined at the official's discretion.
- Team members who arrive late must check-in with the referee to become eligible to take the field.
- Officials are then required to notify the other team of the additional player.
- Number of players: The game is played 7 vs 7. However, a team can play with as few as 5 players. If a team of at least five players is not present at the official start time, they will be granted a grace period of 10 minutes in which they will be able to still successfully field a team without penalty.
  - In this instance, the game will begin as soon as enough eligible players (5) are present for both teams.
  - If a team does not have enough players at the end of the 10-minute grace period, the game will be ruled a forfeit and the team without enough eligible players will be penalized with the loss.
- Following the official start time, if the team ever falls below the required number of eligible players to field a team (5), they will forfeit the result.

## **2. Rules & Guidelines / Game Play**

### **Coin Toss**

- Possession at the start of the game is to be decided by a coin toss administered by the officials.
- The visiting team calls either “heads” or “tails” while the coin is midair following the initial flip and prior to landing on the ground.
- The officials will then rule the coin toss winner based on the result.
- The team winning the coin toss can choose from one of the following options:
  - to either receive or defend first or...
  - they can decide which goal they want to defend first.
- The team losing the coin toss then can choose from the remaining of the two options, depending on the winning team's selection.
- At the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, the teams will switch which side of the field they defend and the team that received the ball to start the half will start the second half on defense.

#### **Formation**

- Teams can field a maximum of seven players on the field at one time.
- The offense must have 4 players on the line of scrimmage (regardless of the number of players on the field). Defense does not have a minimum requirement on the line of scrimmage, except when they are receiving a punt (4 players).
- The defense is allowed to lineup as far forward as the line of scrimmage.
- Only one player is allowed to be in motion at one time.
- Following each half, the teams will switch goals to defend.

#### **Substitutions**

- Substitutions can be made IN BETWEEN PLAYS ONLY.
- Any late substitutions by the offense or the defense will result in a 5-yard penalty and the down will be replayed. Late substitutions will be defined as any substitutions made after the players are set on the line of scrimmage.



# Scoring

Scoring in flag football occurs in the following manner:

- Touchdown
  - Progressing a ball carrier to or beyond the opponent's goal line prior to being deflagged earns six points and a conversion attempt.
- Conversion
  - Conversions are singular plays that are earned by scoring a touchdown.
  - Conversions can be taken from the opponent's 5-yard line or the 12-yard line, and are worth one or two points, respectively.
  - Conversions are earned following the successful progression of a ball carrier beyond the opponent's goal line.
  - Following the completion of a successful touchdown, the offense will need to confirm whether they will be attempting the 1-point conversion or the 2-point conversion. Once the offense has chosen which conversion they will attempt and have relayed the information to the official(s), the offense cannot change their decision. The only way the offense can change their conversion attempt is following a timeout or replayed down in the event of a penalty.
  - In the event that a conversion attempt is intercepted and returned by the defending team across the conversion attempting team's goal line, the intercepting team will be awarded 2 points.
  - In the event that the conversion attempting team allows a safety the defending team will be awarded 2 points.
  - While attempting a 1-point conversion, teams are not in the No Rush zone when the ball is on the 5-yard line. They are not in the No Rush Zone until they are within the goal line and the 5-yard line.
    - Therefore, the offense can attempt a run or a pass during a 1-point conversion attempt since the line of scrimmage is the 5-yard line. In addition, the offense can attempt a run or a pass during a 2-point conversion attempt since the line of scrimmage is the 12-yard line.
  - Touchdowns scored at the end of the first half will have the conversion attempt played immediately afterwards.
  - Touchdowns scored at the end of the game or in the second drive of an overtime period will only have their conversion played out in the event that the conversion could impact the result of the game. These instances include:
    1. If the scoring team is two or less points from tying the score or winning following the touchdown.
    2. If the defending team is two or less points from tying the score or winning following the touchdown.
- Safety
  - A safety occurs when a ball carrier is ruled deflagged or the ball is ruled dead along or on the endzone side of the offensive team's goal line, and awards the defending team two points.
  - The only exception to this occurs when a player receives a punt in the endzone and is deflagged prior to progressing the ball beyond his/her own goal line. This would result in a touchback.

- This includes runners stepping out of bounds behind their own goal line, as well as balls ruled dead out of bounds behind the offensive team's goal line.
- All safeties result in awarding 2 points to the defense and the defense will obtain possession from their own 20-yard line.
- Home teams will be required to provide and keep an official scorebook for all games.

## **Offense**

### **Formation**

- Teams can field a maximum of seven players on the field at one time.
- There must be 4 players on the line of scrimmage for offense (regardless of number of players on the offense).
- Only one player is allowed to be in motion at any one time.

### **General Offense**

- At the start of each half or following a touchdown, teams taking possession of the ball will be spotted at the 20-yard line. There are no kick-offs, however there are punts.
- Teams possessing the ball will run a series of plays, or downs, which can consist of both rushes and passes. The only exception to this is when starting a play from within their opponents rushing zone (inside the opponent's 5-yard line). In this case, plays must only be forward passes.
- Teams will have four downs to reach either a first down or a touchdown.
- Teams must snap the ball within 30 seconds of the official spotting the ball.
- A first down is achieved by advancing the ball beyond either the 20-yard line or the midfield, regardless of where the series of downs started.
- Plays are whistled dead and a down is lost after the following:
  - Ball carrier is deflagged
  - Ball carrier steps out of bounds
  - A touchdown or safety is awarded
  - Ball carrier's knee touches the ground
  - Ball carrier's flag falls off
  - Ball touches ground. Flag Football does not have fumbles. The ball is marked down at the point of the initial impact with the ground. Please note that if a player drops a ball and another player catches it before the ball hits the ground, then they will have possession of the ball.
  - An illegal snap
- The center must fully snap the ball between their legs to their teammate – the center is not eligible to snap the ball to themselves.
  - This rule prohibits the snap from being passed to the side or in any way that causes the ball to not complete pass between the center's legs.
  - The Center must immediately snap the ball. They cannot hold on the ball the entire 5 seconds. The officials will not consider the play to have begun until the ball has been clearly snapped to the Quarterback (see Quarterback definition).
- If the official cannot see the ball at any point during the pass protection period, they will end the pass protection period by signaling eligibility to rush the passer.
  - In addition, play-action passing plays (see play-action definition) in which the official(s) can no longer see the ball will result in forfeiture of the pass protection period.
- Ball carriers are not permitted to use any part of their body to screen or guard their flags from being pulled. (See flag Guarding in penalties section).

- **No Rush Zone:** In the event that the offense is within their opponent's no rush zone, (see no rush zone definition) all plays must utilize a forward pass. When within a no rush zone, teams are not allowed to use a rushing play. A Quarterback can still pitch or hand off the ball to another player but that player is not allowed to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage except in the form of a forward pass. (Please note that once the quarterback hands off the ball the 5 second pass protection is forfeited). After 5 seconds with the referees signal the defense can cross the line of scrimmage. The quarterback can continue the play but they are not allowed to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage except in the form of a forward pass.
  - In the event that the team performs a forward pass that does not pass the line of scrimmage, the play will be immediately ruled dead and the offense will be penalized with a 5 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down.
  - In the event that the offense crosses the line of scrimmage when starting a play from within the no rush zone in any form other than a legal forward pass then the team will be given a loss of 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down.
  - Officials will notify the teams when teams are beginning a play within the No Rush Zone if it is not clear.
- There is no intentional grounding penalty in TCSAAL Flag Football. If the quarterback attempts a pass and the ball makes contact with the ground, the attempt would be ruled incomplete. The quarterback may throw the ball to avoid a sack, but the pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- On 4<sup>th</sup> down, teams must declare whether they will opt to take a protected scrimmage kick or run a play from scrimmage (see special teams section to read kicking guidelines).
- 360-degree Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
  - Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding. This will be at the sole discretion of the officials. Some examples of spinning out of control are spinning into a defender, spinning continuously, and jump spinning. These are just a few examples again this will be determined at the sole discretion of the officials.
- Ball Carriers are not permitted to jump or leave the ground; such action will be regarded as Flag Guarding. This does not include someone attempting to catch the ball.
  - EXCEPTION: The ball carrier must attempt to avoid any contact with other players. Therefore, the official may use their own discretion as to whether the ball carrier inadvertently violated the rules regarding jumping in order to avoid dangerous contact. As a result, a penalty may or may not be issued as a result of the play at the sole discretion of the official.
- Players scoring may be required to have their flag belts examined by officials for compliance following the play. Leaving the endzone prior to or impeding an official's examination will be subject to Unsportsmanlike Conduct and will be enforced on the following drive. If a player is found to be cheating by flag tampering (solely determined at the discretion of the officials), then that individual will be kicked out of the game. The score will not be counted and the play will be ruled a penalty for a 10-yard loss from the line of scrimmage. Finally, the team will be subject to a loss of down.

## Receiving

- All players are eligible receivers.
- The only players that cannot receive the ball are the ones that do not qualify due to not having proper equipment (flag belt). For example, we have had players that will play center but they are too big to wear a flag belt. They are eligible to play without the flag but they cannot receive a pass. We do encourage teams to order oversized flag belts in these situations so the players can be an

eligible receiver. A player without a flag can still catch a tipped pass, but they are marked down at the point of reception. Players are not eligible to tie two flags together for safety reasons.

- To make a legal reception, the player must have at least one foot in bounds while possessing the ball, as determined solely by the officials.
- If a ball carrier loses his flags during a play, the ball will be whistled dead and the ball will be placed at the spot of the catch or where the flags fell off. If the ball had already been caught prior to the flags falling off. But the ball carrier must begin the play with flags attached to the flag belt.
- Defenders are not eligible to pull flags until receiver has complete possession of the ball, as determined by the officials.
- In the event of a tipped ball, all players, including those ineligible to become a ball carrier, are eligible to receive the tipped ball.
  - In this instance, however, the otherwise ineligible ball carrier would be ruled deflagged at the point of the reception.
- Ball carriers and defenders are not permitted to jump, leap or leave the ground.
  - Exceptions:
    - Players can leave the ground to catch or swat a ball.
    - The quarterback can leave the ground in the back field during the 5-second pass protection to attempt a pass.
    - Potential Receivers (including defenders) cannot leap/jump/dive at any time, except to make a catch.
      - Defenders cannot leap/jump/dive to grab a flag.

EXCEPTION: A player may take certain action to avoid a defender if safety is a serious concern as a result of the play. In this instance, an official may use their own discretion as to whether or not to enforce a penalty as a result of the play at the sole discretion of the official.

## **Rushing**

- All players are determined to be eligible to rush the ball.
- The only players that cannot rush the ball are the ones that do not qualify due to not having proper equipment (proper flags). For example, we have had players that will play center but they are too big to wear a flag belt. They are eligible to play without the flag but they cannot rush the ball or be a ball carrier. We do encourage teams to order oversized flags in these situations so the players can be an eligible rusher.
- In the event that a ball carrier loses his flag(s) during a play, the ball will be whistled dead and the ball will be placed at the spot of the catch or where the flag(s) fell off. But the ball carrier must begin the play with flags attached to the flag belt.
- Ball carriers and defenders are not permitted to jump, leap, dive, or leave the ground.
- 360-degree Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
  - Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding. This will be at the sole discretion of the officials. Some examples of spinning out of control are spinning into a defender, spinning continuously, and jump spinning. These are just a few examples again this will be determined at the sole discretion of the officials.
- Teams can run a rushing play at any time except when their team is starting a play from within the No Rush Zone. See No Rush Zone Definition, and see field diagram.

## Screening

### (Offensive line screeners used to protect the ball before the offense crosses the line of scrimmage)

- There will be **no** down field screening. Only screeners on or behind the line of scrimmage before the ball passes the line of scrimmage will be allowed. Once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage no more screening will be allowed.
  - Players already down field must get out of the way of the play. The offensive players can get behind the ball carrier for a potential lateral play but they cannot in any way impede a defender. (Determined at the sole discretion for the officials.)
  - Offensive players can run behind the ball carrier but not in front of or parallel with the ball carrier.
  - The option and lateral plays are allowed but you cannot impede the defense from getting to the ball carrier. Doing so will result in a flag guarding penalty. (Determined at the sole discretion for the officials.)
- Lineman screeners must not initiate contact of any form with defenders in order to complete a legal screen.
- Screeners must keep their hands to their side.
- Screeners cannot place themselves so close to a defender that they force contact, as determined at the discretion of officials.
- Screeners are not permitted to lock arms or connect multiple players in any way.
- Screeners on the line are permitted to move in order to screen an opponent, however, they are never to initiate or force contact with a defender.
- Contact deemed unintentional by officials does not require subsequent penalty and will be determined at the sole discretion of the officials.
- Offensive players cannot run alongside a ball carrier in an attempt to block or screen.

## Punting

- On 4<sup>th</sup> down, teams must declare whether they will opt to take a protected scrimmage kick or run a play from the line of scrimmage.
  - Kicking team must line up no less than four players on the line of scrimmage.
  - Receiving team must line up no less than four players on the line of scrimmage.
  - Kicker must be no less than five yards behind line of scrimmage.
  - Kicker must kick the ball immediately following receipt of snap.
  - Neither kicking team nor receiving team can release from position until ball is kicked.
  - In any instance, teams can change their decision following a timeout or replayed 4<sup>th</sup> down in the event of a penalty.
  - Uncaught kicks are ruled dead at the spot of contact with the ground. Snaps that result in the ball making contact with the ground prior to the punter receiving the snap will be ruled down at the spot of contact with the ground, resulting in a turnover on downs.

## Defense

- Defenders are not permitted to initiate contact with offensive players beyond deflagging.
- Defenders are not permitted to leave the ground in order to deflag a ball carrier.
- Defenders can only leave the ground to catch or knock away the ball. This is the only reason.
- Defenders are not permitted to make contact of any kind with receivers.

- Deflagging receivers prior to reception of the ball will be regarded as Pass Interference.
- Intentional versus incidental contact is to be determined solely by officials.
- Stripping, swatting, or attempting to strip or swat the ball will not be allowed and it will be penalized as an illegal contact penalty. The ball is considered to be an extension of the ball carrier's body.
  - Coaches are to instruct their athletes to go for the flags and not the ball.
- In the event that both the offense and the defense catch the ball simultaneously, the tie will be given to the offense. This decision will be solely determined by the officials.

## **Pass Rushing**

- The Defense cannot rush the quarterback for the first five seconds following the snap. This is referred to as the Pass Protection Period. The referee will signal to players the end of five seconds by lowering their arm. At this point, the defense can cross the line of scrimmage.
  - EXCEPTION:
    - Any exchange from QB to another player ends the pass protection period. If the Quarterback (See QB Definition) laterals/ handoffs or exchanges the ball to another player then the defense can go after the ball carrier at that point and the pass protection period has been forfeited for the remainder of that play.
    - If the quarterback crosses the line of scrimmage, the Pass Protection Period ends.
    - If the official cannot see the ball at any point during the pass protection period, they will end the pass protection period by signaling eligibility to rush the passer.
  - Upon crossing the line of scrimmage, any ball carrier can be deflagged.

## **Penalties**

Players and teams violating rules will be subject to accompanying penalties, including, but not limited to:

### Offense

- Delay of Game. 5 yards, replay down, clock stops, stops play.
- Flag Guarding. 10 yards from the spot of the foul, loss of down.
- Flag Tampering. 10 yards, loss of down. offender may be ejected.
- Illegal Forward Pass. 5 yards, loss of down.
- Illegal Kick. 10 yards, replay down.
- Illegal Motion. 5 yards, repeat down. Stops Play.
- Offensive Pass Interference. 10 yards, loss of down.
- Late Substitution. 5 yards, replay down.

### Defense.

- Illegal Contact. 10 yards, automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.
- Illegal Flag Pull. 10 yards from the spot of the foul and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down (in the event that the penalty took place behind the line of scrimmage, the 10 yards will be awarded from the line of scrimmage).
  - Excessive illegal flag pulling may be treated as Unsportsmanlike Conduct as deemed appropriate by the officials.
- Offsides. 5 yards, repeat down.
- Pass Interference. Ball spotted at foul, automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down.

- Late Substitution. 5 yards, replay down.

#### General

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct. 15 yards, potential ejection.
  - Unsportsmanlike Conduct is a penalty that is used when a coach, fan, or player's actions interferes with the officials' abilities to maintain a friendly, age-appropriate atmosphere for the game. This includes, but is not limited to:
    - Spiking the ball.
    - Spinning the ball.
    - Aggressively returning the ball to officials.
    - Aggressively throwing flags after a tackle.
    - Gestures or taunts directed at the opposing team or team's fans.
    - Excessive touchdown celebrations including choreography celebrations, at the discretion of the officials.
    - Wearing jewelry.
    - Verbal abuse of officials.
    - Any belligerent physical contact.
    - Players leaving the sidelines.
    - Players demanding rule clarifications or interpretations (see section 2.j.4.e)
    - Racial or religious remarks.
    - Littering.
    - Aggressive contact with officials.
    - Any other act determined unsportsmanlike as deemed appropriate by the officials or TCSAAL administration.
  - Penalties for Unsportsmanlike Conduct start at 15 yards, and can incur additional penalties as deemed appropriate by the officials.
  - Players committing Unsportsmanlike Conduct infractions are subject to immediate ejection, as deemed appropriate by officials.
  - Depending on the severity of the infraction, players ejected are subject to further suspension for additional games as deemed appropriate by league administration.
  - Teams and fans committing persistent Unsportsmanlike Conduct infractions will be subject to forfeiture of the game result, as deemed appropriate by officials.
- Excessive littering from fans or players, as determined by league administration, is subject to forfeiture of game and additional fines.
- Teams not adhering to the TCSAAL Handbook or teams that pose substantial risk to the safety of others, as determined by league administration, may have the remainder of their season forfeited.

#### Procedures for Enforcing Penalties

- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines the penalty.
- All penalties can be declined by the opposing team's coach.
- In the event that penalties are called on both teams during a play, penalties will offset.
  - The one exception here is that if one of the two teams was penalized for Unsportsmanlike Conduct, in which case the team penalized for Unsportsmanlike Conduct would incur the full consequence(s) of the infraction.
- In the event that both teams commit Unsportsmanlike Conduct infractions, each team will incur the full consequence(s) of the penalty.
- In the event that any team commits multiple Unsportsmanlike Conduct infractions during a play, they will be subject to the aggregate consequence(s) of the penalties.
- Penalties called after the play is ruled dead will not be weighed against those called during the play.

- Offensive penalties committed from scrimmage plays starting within the (their own) No Rush Zone will result in the ball being spotted half way between the line of scrimmage and the offense's goal line.
- Defensive penalties committed from scrimmage plays starting within the team's No Rush Zone will result in the ball being spotted half way between the line of scrimmage and the defense's goal line.
- Coaches are permitted to request clarification from the officials in between plays from their own sideline as to the calls made during the game. Excessive unnecessary requests may not be addressed. Clarification request must be made immediately following the play in question, and prior to the next play starting.

## **Instances**

- Inadvertent Whistle.
  - In the instance that the official unintentionally blows their whistle:
    - Offense has the option to either accept the result of the play at the spot of the whistle, or can opt to replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

### **3. Appendix**

## **Definitions**

- 10-Minute Grace Period – The amount of time allowed for a team without enough eligible players to arrive before the game is ruled a forfeit.
- Ball Carrier – The Ball Carrier is defined as a legal possessor of the ball during a down or play.
- Center – The Center is identified as an individual who initiates the play by snapping the ball between their legs to the Quarterback.
- Conversion – A Conversion is the attempted extra point(s) following a touchdown.
- Dead Ball – A ball and play is ruled dead if certain conditions are met.
- Deflagging – Deflagging is the process of removing one or more flags from a ball carrier.
- Down – Term for numbered plays, each series of downs includes four plays numbered 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Endzone – The 10 yards of marked space that extend beyond the 80 yard field of play.
- Field of Play – The 80 yards of field in between the two endzones.
- First Down – A first down awards four new downs or plays.
- Flag Belt – Required accessory that is worn around the waste.
- Forward pass – A pass directed towards the defenses endzone.
- Half(time) – The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter combined are defined as the 1<sup>st</sup> half, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter combined are defined as the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.
- Incomplete Pass – A forward pass that makes contact with the ground.
- Interception – An interception occurs any time a defender obtains possession of the ball prior to the play being ruled dead.
- Line of Scrimmage – The yard line upon which the ball is spotted for an offensive play.
- No Rush Zone - The five yards of space at each end of the field of play within the 5 yard-line and the endzone.
- Official Start Time - The scheduled start time of the game.
- Overtime Drive – A series of downs starting from the opponents 10 yard line.
- Overtime Period – An overtime period is defined as one series of downs by both teams.



- Pass – A pass play is defined as a play that attempts a legal pass.
- Pass Protection Period – The five seconds of rush protection given to the Quarterback is defined as the pass protection period.
- Play-Action Passing Play – A pass play in football in which the quarterback fakes a handoff before passing the ball.
- Pullover Jerseys – A set of unnumbered jerseys provided by the away team permitted for play in the event that uniform colors are too similar for effective officiating.
- Punt – A punt play is one where the offense attempts to legally kick the ball down the field, toward their opponent
- Quarterback – The first person to possess the ball from the center on each play.
- Reception – A reception is defined as complete control of the ball following a legal catch.
- Rush(Defensive) – Defensive rushing, or pass rushing, is what occurs when defenders are permitted to pass the line of scrimmage following the pass protection period.
- Rush(Offensive) – Offensive rushing, or rush plays, is an attempt from offense to gain yardage by having a ball carrier run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Series of Downs – One set of 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> downs.
- Snap – A snap occurs when a player legally exchanges the ball through his/her legs to the Quarterback in order to initiate the play.
- Tipped Ball – A tipped ball is an otherwise legally attempted pass that has been deflected or obstructed in any way.
- Turnover – A turnover is defined as the result of a change of possession.

## **TCSAAL Flag Football Playoff Structure:**

- Please see TCSAAL Playoff Structure in the TCSAAL Handbook.

## **Tie-Breaker Scenarios**

- Please see tie-breaker scenarios to determine seeding in the TCSAAL Handbook.

## **4. Final Notes**

### **Points of Emphasis**

- 360-degree Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
  - Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding. This will be at the sole discretion of the officials. Some examples of spinning out of control are spinning into a defender, spinning continuously, and jump spinning. These are just a few examples again this will be determined at the sole discretion of the officials.
- Offense must line up at least 4 on the line of scrimmage regardless of number of players on the field. Offense and Defense must line up 4 players on the line of scrimmage during a punt regardless of the number of players on the field.
- Pockets are NOT allowed on shorts. If shorts have pockets they must be taped shut. This is a safety procedure. Teams are encouraged to keep some black duct tape (or other color that matches color of shorts) in their equipment bags for this purpose.
- Games need to start promptly after the completion of the previous game. Teams need to warm up before their start time.
- Teams are responsible for all of their trash. This includes all of their spectators' trash. Please help us maintain the facilities so we do not lose the ability to use them.

- In addition to the TCSAAL Flag Football Rules, teams are also expected to adhere to the TCSAAL Handbook.
- Schools are responsible for bringing plenty of water, sunscreen, shade and snacks for their team(s).
- Remember that the number one priority is Safety and Sportsmanship.
- No Rush Zone: When a team is within an opponent's 5 yard-line and their opponent's endzone the offense is not allowed to rush the ball and all plays must be a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Only Quarterbacks receive the benefit of the 5-second Pass Protection Period. Any exchange from the quarterback to another player ends the Pass Protection Period.
- Teams will switch direction each half instead of each quarter.
- Coaches are prohibited from entering the field of play, unless instructed to do so by the official(s). Coaches must remain on their sideline between each of the 20-yard markers. Failure to do so can result in penalties administered by the official(s).

### **Concluding Points of Order**

- All rules and definitions not covered here will be treated as per National Football League rules, which can be found at <http://www.nfl.com/rulebook>.
- All coaches, players, and fans attending any TCSAAL flag football game or flag football related event are expected to be familiar and in compliance with the entire contents of this document.
- All coaches, players, and fans attending any TCSAAL flag football game or flag football related event are also expected to be familiar and in compliance with the entire contents of the TCSAAL Handbook and are required and bound by all TCSAAL rules within the Handbook.
- It is each team's responsibility to ensure that all fans, faculty, players, and anyone in attendance with that team are aware of the guidelines and rules of the TCSAAL Handbook and the TCSAAL Flag Football Rules.