**Introduction**

The attached rules are valid for the 2019 South East Youth American Football season. There are a few amendments to the previous versions, so please read carefully.

Prior to the game the following rules will be applied, all players will line up and be inspected for the following -

All players should be wearing shorts without pockets,

Shall have a mouth guard

All players will tuck any outer clothing into their shorts,

The tag belt should be visible over the outer clothing and

Tags will be on either hip.

Any shorts with pockets will be taped up.

**What is Flag American Football? A brief overview**

American Flag Football is an Invasion Game. The game is non-contact. Therefore, any contact will be called a foul.

The objective is to outscore your opponents. This is achieved by scoring touchdowns. Other points to note:

1. There is no kicking allowed
2. It can be a mixed sex game.
3. There is no physical blocking allowed,
4. and tackling involves removing a flag/tag worn by opposing players.

* The Game requires very little equipment –
* Players need to wear suitable clothing and footwear
* Cones can be used to mark out playing areas
* Appropriate sized American Football(s) and
* Flags/Tags are the only other equipment required.

**Game Play - Equipment**

Requirements are as follows: -

Shorts without pockets

Flag belts and tags

Mouthguard

Appropriate club shirt and

Either studded football boots or trainers

**Game Play - Timings**

* Game durations shall be no less than 15 minutes or longer than 30 minutes.
* Game length is decided on the day
* A running clock is utilised throughout the game
* Offence has **20** seconds to snap ball once it is spotted by the official, on the line of scrimmage
* Each team has 2 x 30 second timeouts per game
* The clock starts on the first snap and is only stopped for time outs.
* After each play the team with the ball has 20 seconds to get organised after the official placing (or “spotting”) ball in position for play
* The Official will communicate to the offensive team that time is progressing with a final 5 second call.
* Possession starts from the 5-yard line of team winning coin toss (this team becomes “offence”; opponents’ become “defence”).

**Game Play – Pitch Sizes**

1. For under 11’s, the pitch size shall be set as 25 Yards wide and 60 yards long
2. For under 14’s, the pitch size shall be 25 yards wide and 70 yards long.
3. 2 x 10-yard end zones should be marked out
4. No run zones will only be installed as the offensive team tries to score.

*To start a game, there should be a "coin toss" or alternative method of determining who has the choice of either starting with the ball – offence or defending an end zone – defence.*

**Offense - General**

* The offensive team has 4 attempts to make halfway – if halfway is achieved then a further 4 downs are allowed.
* To start a play, the Ball will be “set” by the official and will be “snapped” by the centre to the quarterback.
* In the event of a 4 a-side game, the centre is not used and the QB can start the play with the ball in their hands.
* If the opposition have called a Blitz, the QB can wait for the “Blitzer” to cross the line of scrimmage, then S/he is free to run the ball.
* Players on offence are not allowed to start their run-down field until ball is snapped. If they do so, they will be penalized as a “false start”.
* Ball can only be thrown forward once on any down by a player who must be behind line of scrimmage.
* Once a player has caught a forward pass s/he cannot **forward** pass it on to a team-mate.
* If at any time, the ball hits ground, the ball is deemed "DEAD" and the play is over.
* The quarterback must be behind the line of scrimmage (LOS) when passing the ball
* “No-running zones” are located 5 yards each end zone.
* Players spinning, designed to evade a tackle is fine, as long as one of the players feet ’s on the floor.
* Any player leaping to evade a tackle by jumping or leaping will be deemed as a foul and a penalty, which is assessed from the spot of the foul.

**Offence Quarterbacking**

* The Quarterback has **7** seconds to pass ball.
* ***The Official will remind the QB at 5 seconds that time is almost up***.
* Failure to throw ball in 7 second’s results in loss of down; ball returned to LOS.
* All players are eligible to catch passes, including quarterback if s/he first hands-off ball.
* A player must have at least one foot in bounds to make reception.
* Only one player, per play may go “in motion”. If two players shift, this is a penalty and either a 5 yards penalty or a loss of a down.

**Blocking/Obstruction**

* Either offensive or defensive players may not physically stop opponents from running down field or catching/intercepting passes. However, players are entitled to "stand their ground" by standing still.
* If a player impedes progress - that will be classified as interference and the offending team will take a penalty at the spot of the foul.

**Flag Guarding**

* The Ball-carrier cannot push defender’s hand away from the flag or hold on to his/her flag to stop it being removed (this is called “Flag Guarding” and is a penalty).
* Offensive players may not “push off” on the defenders or deliberately run in to the path of a defender from reaching ball-carrier (i.e. no blocking).
* The centre, once snapped the ball, may not move to block a "blitz". However, if the Centre sees a Blitzer coming they are entitled to stand still.

**Defence**

* All defensive players must be ready to proceed with the play at any time.
* The Defence can try to stop offence from advancing ball or scoring by

1. catching the ball when it is in flight (interception);
2. batting ball away from intended receiver while it is in flight;
3. tackling receiver after s/he has caught ball or by
4. tackling running back as soon as hand off is made.

* ***Prior to the snap, all defensive players must be 1 yard from the line of scrimmage. This is called a neutral zone.***
* Defensive players are not allowed to touch an offensive player, nor grab shirt or tag belt in pass coverage. This will be deemed pass interference with a 5-yard penalty.
* Offence has 4 downs to move ball into the defenders’ half way or to score.
* If an offensive player runs into his/her opponents’ end zone with ball or catches ball in his/her opponents’ end zone, a touchdown is scored and gains 6 points
* Defenders cannot enter the neutral zone of the oppositions “back field” unless a Blitz is called. Other defenders can only enter the back field once a “handoff” has been made.
* If a defender intercepts ball, s/he can try to run it back to opposing team’s end zone for a touchdown.
* If ball is intercepted and ball-carrier is subsequently tackled before s/he gets to end zone, that team has its first down at spot of tackle
* If the ball is intercepted by a defender and s/he advance the ball towards the opponents end zone and subsequently drops the ball. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.
* Defenders cannot pull flags from offensive players until offensive players have possession of ball.

**The Blitz**

* A defensive player may "Blitz" the quarterback. What is a Blitz? The Defensive player must indicate to the official that a Blitz maybe coming.
* The signal for indicating a blitz, is for the player to raise his/her hand and make the official aware.
* The official will then mark 7 yards and indicate the mark to the Blitzer
* The Blitzer can then run, upon the snap of the ball towards the Quarterback, unimpeded.
* No more than one player can blitz at any one time
* The Quarterback can move around sideways, but not cross the Line of Scrimmage
* Fake handoffs nullify the 7-yard rule.
* Interceptions that remain in end zone result in intercepting team taking possession from own 5-yard line.
* Should the intercepting player leave *and then return* to end zone and be tackled, result is a safety.

**Points Scoring**

* Touchdown = 6 points
* Interception return for Touchdown = 6 points
* Safety = 2 points

**Mercy Rule**

In the unlikely event of one team being dominant and the team gets 24 points in front of the opposition, the game will continue, but additional scores will not be recorded.

If the opposing team then scores, then the dominant team scores, this will be recorded.

**Dead Ball Situations**

* Ball becomes dead when points are scored; ball-carrier’s flag is pulled or becomes illegal; when any part of ball-carrier’s body (other than hand or foot) touches ground.
* Play whistled dead at point where ball-carrier’s flag falls off.
* Player is ineligible to receive ball if his/her flag has fallen off. However, if the tag belt/flag is removed by the opposition, either accidently or on purpose the play should finish where the ball was caught. Any attempt to continue with the play will be whistled dead.
* Fumbles are spotted at point of ball-carrier’s foot when ball was lost.
* Fumbled snaps return to LOS.

**Penalties**

* All penalties are 5 yards assessed from LOS and may be declined unless otherwise noted.
* Downs will be repeated unless otherwise noted.
* Only team captain or Head Coach may question officials about rule clarification and interpretation.
* Penalty after interception assessed from point of interception after return/play is dead.
* Defensive penalties (5 yards):
  + Offside.
  + Substitution fouls.
  + Disconcerting signals.
  + Interference with opponent or ball at snap.
  + Illegal blitz.
* Defensive penalties (5yard + automatic first down):
  + Interference.
  + Illegal contact
  + Illegal flag pull
* Offensive penalties (5 yards):
  + Flag guarding.
  + Delay of game.
  + Substitution fouls.
  + Illegal motion.
  + False start (cannot be declined).
  + Illegal snap.
  + Illegal shift/failure to pause.
  + Holding.
  + Diving/jumping (with ball).
  + Player out of bounds.
  + Illegal forward pass.
  + Offensive pass interference and “picks” (loss of down).
  + Running in the “no-running zone” (loss of down at previous spot).

*And finally Celebrating scores or victories.*

*Whilst, we wish our children to enjoy the experience of playing flag football, could all coaches be aware that excessive celebrating will not be tolerated.*

*On several occasions in the 2018 season, we had teams and children who disrespected the opposition or when scoring threw the ball down in an aggressive manner mocking the opposing team.*

*Final point.*

*At the final tournament. One team walked off the pitch claiming to be the “Champions” and singing a song. Whilst, this may be a small point, it causes players and parents to question what we are communicating!*

*We have a good programme going, it would be terrible to let it go to waste through the actions of a few people.*