PANTHERS

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Official Rules Handbook

Prepared for Coaches, Officials & Parents

Divisions: Kindergarten/8th Grade Co-ed • 4th–8th Grade Girls

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1. **Boro Flag Introduction: Our mission is to provide a safe space for both boys and girls to learn the sport of Football in a competitive but respectful way.**

2. Equipment & Player Requirements

- All players must wear a mouthpiece to play. No exceptions.
- Jerseys/Shirts must be tucked in under the flag belt at all times during games and before every play. A player with an untucked jersey is ineligible to play offense until corrected. Jerseys/Shirts may not interfere with flags.
- Flag belts must be worn at waist level with three flags attached — one on each hip and one in back. The belt may not be positioned in a way that obstructs any flag.
- 3 Flags will be used during games. One flag on each side and one on the back of the player.
- Footwear - Soccer or Football cleats to be worn at all times (no metal cleats)

3. Field Setup

Play begins at the 45-yard line, moving in one direction toward the end zone. Two first-down markers are placed at the 30-yard line and the 15-yard line. The offense has four downs to advance across each marker (each crossing is a new first down) and then to reach the end zone.

- Drive start: 45-yard line.
- First-down markers: 30-yard line and 15-yard line.
- Touchdown: reaching the end zone beyond the final marker.
- Each side will have no more than 5 players and no less than 4 players
- No-Run-Zone - The last 5 yards of the field are considered no-run-zones and as the name entails, the offense cannot perform a run play and must instead pass the ball.

4. Positions & Roles

4.1 Offense

The offense consists of five players: a center, a quarterback, and three receivers/backs. The center must be on the line of scrimmage (LOS); up to four players total may be on the LOS.

Center

- Snaps the ball in one continuous motion between the legs; the ball must leave the center's hands completely.
- Becomes an eligible receiver only after the snap is completed.

Quarterback (QB)

- The first offensive player to gain possession of the ball after the snap.
- The quarterback has 7 seconds, from receiving the snap, to release the ball. Once a backwards handoff, pass or lateral occurs, the 7 second rule goes away and the offense has an unlimited amount of time to throw a forward pass.
- Must line up off the line of scrimmage.
- May never run the ball directly across the line of scrimmage (no "QB sneak").

Receiver / Running Back

- Any offensive player who neither snaps nor directly receives the snap.
- Eligible to receive a handoff or catch a pass.

4.2 Defense

Blitzer

- A single defender who lines up with their entire body more than 7 yards from the line of scrimmage at the snap may declare themselves a blitzer by raising one hand clearly above their head before the snap. The Blitzer must raise their hand completely before the ball is snapped - failure to do so makes the blitzer ineligible to rush and crossing the LOS will be marked as a defensive foul.
- Only ONE Blitzer is permitted and only one player may declare as blitzer
- A legal blitz grants right-of-way over the offense's general right-of-way, because the blitzer is in immediate pursuit of the ball.
- The blitz must begin immediately at the snap and go directly toward the point where the QB receives the snap.
- A blitzer who rushes late, slowly, toward a different spot, changes direction, or does not rush at all loses right-of-way — but may still play as any other defender.
- If an offensive foul (illegal shielding/blocking) forces the blitzer to change direction, the blitzer keeps their right-of-way for a continued direct rush at the snap point.

- **Defense coaches may remain on the field for grades K-5th during a play but cannot interfere with offense at any time nor be inside the endzone at any time. Failure to do so results in an automatic first down for the offense.**

Defensive player

- A defender who does not signal a blitz and who legally crosses the line of scrimmage after an offense play (Handoff or pass).
- After a legal handoff or pass, any defender may cross the line of scrimmage.
- A defender who crosses the LOS ahead of a handoff or pass (i.e., before the ball has been legally advanced past it) is offside; the play results in a defensive foul and the ball is advanced for the offense (See penalty section)

5. Game Timing

- Games are 40 minutes: two 20-minute halves.
- Halftime is 5 minutes.
- One 30-second timeout is awarded to each offense per half and only the offense may call timeout.
- If either team gains a 30-point lead, the clock runs continuously (no stoppages) for the remainder of the game.
- Clock may be stopped for the following reasons:
  - Injuries on the field, sideline interference, unsportsmanlike conduct, weather delay (referees have the right to choose stoppage)

6. Scoring

Score	**Points**
Touchdown	6
PAT — pass play from the 5-yard line	1
PAT — pass or run play from the 10-yard line	2

- Defense cannot score (No Pick-6) - interceptions are position turnover.

7. Live Ball & Dead Ball Rules

7.1 Dead Ball — General

Any official may whistle a play dead. A play is ruled dead when:

- The ball hits the ground. If this happens on a bad snap, the ball is placed where it hit the ground. K-1 grades can continue the play.
- The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.
- The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
- A touchdown, or PAT.
- Any part of the body other than the feet or hands touches the ground.
- The ball-carrier's flag falls out on its own - ball placed at the spot where the flag fell
- A receiver catches the ball while in possession of one flag or no flags.
- An inadvertent whistle is blown (see 7.2).

7.2 Inadvertent Whistle

If an official blows the whistle in error during a live play (an inadvertent whistle), the offense is given the choice between two outcomes: (a) advance the ball to the nearest first down, or (b) take the spot of the ball when the whistle blew without an automatic first down (unless the player crosses first down marker). The offense's choice is final for that down. This rule is applied to ALL grade levels and divisions.

7.3 Passing & Handoffs — Beyond the Line of Scrimmage

All passes and handoffs must originate behind the line of scrimmage. Once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage — by a run, a completed handoff, or a completed pass — no further backward or lateral pass, handoff, or pitch may occur; from that point forward, only the single offensive player currently in possession may advance the ball.

- **Penalty for a violation: Loss of down and the ball returned to the spot of the original snap.**

7.4 Blocking / Screening

No blocking or screening is allowed by the offense at any time. **A violation results in a dead ball, loss of down, and the ball is placed back at the spot of origin of the play. An offensive attempt to block Blitzer is considered a foul (See Penalty section).**

8. Division-Specific Rules

The table below lines up the three divisions side by side so a rule can be compared at a glance. Anything not listed for a division follows the general rules in Sections 2–7.

Category	K / 1st Grade	2nd–5th Grade	6th–8th Grade
Play clock	40 seconds to snap; loss of down if missed	30 seconds to snap; loss of down AND 10-yard penalty if missed	30 seconds to snap; loss of down AND 10-yard penalty if missed
Blitz	Not allowed — no defender may cross the LOS	Allowed; blitzer must signal and line up 7+ yards back	Allowed; blitzer must signal and line up 7+ yards back
Non-blitz defenders	N/A (no rush at all pre-handoff)	May line up closer than 7 yards; may not jam/obstruct receivers	May line up closer than 7 yards; may not jam/obstruct receivers
QB run	Not allowed	Not allowed	Not allowed
Pre-snap coaching	Coaches may remain on field - Please refer to Offense/Defense Rules	Coaches may remain on field - Please refer to Offense/Defense Rules	Coaches may remain on field - Please refer to Offense/Defense Rules
QB rush window	10 seconds after ref's signal, then defense may rush the QB (not a blitz) - loss of down if failure to pass or	N/A — governed by blitz rule above	N/A — governed by blitz rule above

	handoff within the 10 seconds		
Interceptions	Change of possession; no defensive TD	Change of possession; no defensive TD	Change of possession; no defensive TD
Flag falls off	Play dead (listed under general dead-ball triggers)	Play dead (listed under general dead-ball triggers)	Play dead (listed under general dead-ball triggers)

9. Penalty Reference

Consolidated from the sections above, plus the recommended additions (marked) needed to make enforcement consistent across all three divisions.

Infraction	Penalty	Game Regulation/Explanation
Blocking / screening (offense)	Dead ball, loss of down, ball returned to spot of origin	First infraction is a warning - ball spot of origin Second or more - 10 yard penalty advances for the offense
Defensive offside (crossing LOS early)	Defensive foul; 5-yd ball advanced for the offense and restart the current down	
Coach in end zone during a play	5-yard penalty; down replayed	In the event of an extra point, play is replayed - coaches will be given one warning, failure to comply will result in expulsion from game
Lateral/backward pass after ball crosses LOS	Loss of down, ball returned to spot of origin	

Illegal jamming/obstruction (2nd–8th grade)	5 yards penalty advancing the ball for the offense and replay the down	
False start / illegal formation (all divisions)	5-yard penalty against offense and loss of down	
Late snap, K-5th (missed play clock)	Loss of down	6th-8th = Loss of down + 10 yard penalty against offense
Unnecessary roughness (defense or offense)	10 yard penalty Ball is advanced for the offense from the spot of the foul - for offensive penalty 10 yard penalty from where the play started	Offensive foul - excessive contact, stiff-arming a defender, running directly into or plowing through a defender rather than avoiding them Defensive foul - excessive contact, using physical force to stop the ball carrier, running into offense egregiously
Flag guarding	Play ruled dead at that spot	
Illegal rush	The rusher is not lined up at least seven yards off the line of scrimmage	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage

10. League-Wide Rules:

Sportsmanship & Conduct Code — Prohibits unnecessary roughness, taunting, and arguing with officials by players or coaches. A warning will be issued and any incident following the waning will result in expulsion from the game. Failure to comply with expulsion will result in forfeit of game by the aggravating side's team.

Minimum Playtime Rule (K-5th) — There will never be a time where an active player is not put into play. Coaches are to monitor and ensure all players participate during a game. If any coach egregiously sits a player for other than injury or equipment issues game score will be forfeited.

Weather / Field-Safety Policy — Heat Index exceeding 95 degrees, lightning/thunder or excessive rain will result in delays or cancellation of games and practices. Please see Field Safety rules within city rules.

Forfeiture Policy — A game will be forfeited if any of the following occur: Less than 4 players can participate, conduct rules are broken, or if safety parameters dictate the game to be over.

Referee/Coach Conference Procedure — A coach may request a rules clarification mid-game without disrupting pace of play via a timeout to be charged for this.

11. Glossary

Term	**Definition**
Line of Scrimmage (LOS)	The yard line at which the ball is placed for the snap; separates offense and defense pre-snap.
Blitzer	A defender who signals (raised hand) and lines up 7+ yards from the LOS, gaining right-of-way to rush the QB directly.
Rusher	A defender who crosses the LOS without signaling a blitz, after a legal handoff or pass has occurred.
Right-of-way	Priority given to a player (offense generally; a legal blitzer specifically) when a collision path is contested.
Dead Ball	A moment at which play officially stops per the triggers in Section 7.1.

Inadvertent Whistle	An official's mistaken whistle during a live play; see Section 7.2 for the offense's choice of remedy.
Flag Guarding	Using a hand or arm to block a defender from pulling a flag; results in a dead ball at that spot.
PAT	Point-After-Touchdown attempt, worth 1 point (5-yard line, pass only) or 2 points (10-yard line, pass or run).
Screening	Offensive blocking to shield a defender from the ball-carrier; prohibited at all times.