

HFBC Flag Football Rules 2014

This is a Houston's First Baptist Church and Summit Young Single Adults Flag Football League and players are asked to act accordingly. Church athletic leagues can have conflict. We ask that each participant do his/her part in resolving any potential conflict. Let us keep the following verse in spirit, mind, and action:

"Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies."

Philippians 4:8-9 (The Message)

INTRAMURAL CO-ED FLAG FOOTBALL RULES AND REGULATIONS

The home team at the beginning of the game will lead a prayer and devotion (supplied by Summit) and the visiting team will lead a prayer at the end of the game.

Do not argue with the referees. They are the SOLE authority on the field. ONLY the team captain should approach the referees to seek clarification on any issues.

Regular season consists of 4 weeks of double-header games. Top 16 teams make playoffs. Single-elimination brackets.

All flag football games will be conducted under the rules of the **Texas Amateur Athletic Federation Flag Football Rules** with the following exceptions:

TEAM

Teams will consist of up to 5 men and up to 3 women on the field during play. Players may ONLY play on ONE team, even if their class has multiple teams. Exception if getting picked-up (see below).

Each team under penalty of forfeiture must have six players (minimum 4 men and 2 women) on the playing field at the designated time of the game and must maintain a minimum of six players on the field throughout the game.

If a team has less than 5 men and 3 women available the opposing team does not have to match ratio. No team will be forced to play with less than 5 men and 3 women if available.

Picking up players: A team that has less than 8 players available may pick up players in such gender proportion as to get to the full 8 player team (5 men and 3 women) assuming they have at least 4 players available from their official roster. If a team has 8 or more players available (and at least 5 men and 3 women), they will NOT be allowed to pick up any players. **Team captains are responsible for reporting to the referee and the opposing team captain if they are picking up any players.** A penalty of 3 points per player picked up will be enforced (up to a maximum of 4 players picked up). This penalty will **DOUBLE** to 6 points per player picked up if it is discovered **AFTER** the game starts that a team has picked up players and not notified the referee AND the opposing team captain. There will be NO picking up players in the playoffs except in the case of injury (and only to maintain the ideal team of 5 men and 3 women).

Official rosters: Team rosters consist ONLY of players who have paid and played in at least TWO games during the regular season. The intramural coordinator, George Watson (george.watson@houstonsfirst.org), is the SOLE keeper of official team rosters. Players may NOT be added to the official roster after the conclusion of the regular season.

PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, SUBSTITUTIONS

Field Dimensions: The playing field is 60 yards long by 35 yards wide and is divided into four 15-yard zones, plus two 8-yard end zones.

Each half shall start with a snap from the 15 yard line.

Before the start of the game the referee shall toss a coin in the presence of the opposing team captains, after first designating which captain shall call the coin.

The captain winning the toss shall have the following options for the first half:

1. To choose whether his/her team will be on offense first or defense first.
2. To choose the goal his/her team will defend.
3. The captain not having the first choice of options for a half, shall exercise the remaining option.

At the start of the second half, the teams will switch directions and the team that started the first half on defense will start the second half on offense.

Possession after a score and a try: After a team has scored a touchdown and attempted their try (extra point) the ball will be placed on the scored upon team's 15 yard line.

Game Timing: All games will consist of two 16-minute halves (running clock) + 5 plays (no clock) per half, with a five-minute halftime period. The clock will run continuously unless a team requests a time out. A team may have one time-out per half--one minute in length.

Forfeit Time: Once the referee states that the game is ready to begin and the stated game time is the current time or that time has passed, both teams must be prepared to participate in the scheduled game. If one/both teams is not able, there will be a grace period of 10 minutes from the start of the devotional. Forfeits will be scored 14-0.

MERCY RULE

If, at the end of the second half, a team is 27 or more points ahead at the start of 5 plays or at any point during the 5 plays, the game shall be over.

TIME OUTS & CONFERENCES

Time-Outs: Each team is entitled to one charged time-out during each half without penalty. Each time-out is one minute.

Injured Player and Blood Rule: An injured or apparently injured player, who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead, shall be replaced for at least one down unless the time-out or intermission has occurred. A player with an excessive amount of blood (determined by the officials) shall be considered an injured player and must sit out until they have secured a clean uniform and stopped bleeding. A player that suffers a head, spinal or neck injury, or loses consciousness must have a doctors approval (in writing) before they are permitted to participate in another game.

UNIFORMS, PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

Players: 8 players constitute a team. On Offense, 4 players must be on the line of scrimmage, and they may have no less than 6 players to play a game, with a minimum of 2 females and 4 males.

Flags: Each player must wear the flag belts provided by HFBC. All Flag belts must have two flags that are to be positioned one to each hip. All players on a team must have the same color flags, but opposite of the opposing team.

Shirts: Shirts **MUST** be tucked in so that the flag can be easily seen and grabbed. If a sweatshirt is worn, it **MUST** be tucked in a manner in which it will not cover the flag belts. One team must wear pull-over jerseys provided by HFBC (opposite color as opposing team) unless ALL players on BOTH teams are wearing matching-colored shirts (opposite colors for each team).

NO belt loops and **NO** pockets on any form of shorts/pants will be allowed. **THIS RULE WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED FOR PLAYER SAFETY REASONS.** Players can not tape pockets, belt loops, numbers on shirts etc. Shorts with draw strings are strongly encouraged.

Metal cleats are illegal. Players may **NOT** participate in sandals, boots, dress shoes, or in bare feet. Players wearing illegal shoes will be disqualified.

ABSOLUTELY NO JEWELRY WILL BE ALLOWED (Medical Alert Bracelets must be secured with tape or a legal wrist band)

ABSOLUTELY NO SUNGLASSES WILL BE ALLOWED (only prescription glasses and sports protective eyewear will be allowed) *the George Watson Rule

Braces & Casts: NO casts or metal braces will be allowed unless covered by a soft material.

Football: Teams should provide their own football and it must be a regular size ball (college or pro size). They have the option of using the opponent's ball if they wish. If they wish to use their own ball, they are to bring it in when they take over on offense. The offensive team is always responsible for retrieving the football during play.

THE GAME

Quarterback: Don't EVER hit or push the quarterback. They are off limits!

Blocking: All offensive screen blocking shall take place without contact. The screen blocker MUST have his/her hands and arms behind the back (exception: girls may cross their arms in

front of their body). ANY use of arms, elbows, legs or body to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. The screen blocker's movement is limited to side-to-side and backwards. **NO forward blocking or downfield blocking is allowed.** A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking. NO charging into offensive blockers, the defense must make an effort to get around the offensive blocker. If the defense does charge or bull rush into offensive blocker it will be a 10-yard penalty and may lead to a player ejection.

Punting: When punting the ball, a kicking team must announce its intentions to the officials before the ball is declared ready to play. After such an announcement, the kicking team can only change the decision by a time out (called by either team) or by accepting any penalty. The receiving team must give a 20-yard cushion. No one may move besides the kicker in the act of kicking until the ball is away.

The ball will be declared dead where the receiving team touches the ball (without crossing the 20-yard cushion) or where the ball comes to rest (if not touched) or rolls out of bounds.

If three downs are played and no female has been included and a punt ensues, a female **MUST** punt the ball.

Fumbles: Any fumble, lateral or forward pass that is intercepted or caught in the air may be advanced. Any time the ball touches the ground during a play from scrimmage, (excluding incomplete passes) the ball is automatically downed there. Balls may be fumbled backwards into the end zone for a safety or a loss but not forward for a touchdown or a gain.

Snap: The quarterback must be at least 4 yards behind the line of scrimmage. The ball must be put in play with a legal backward snap within 25 seconds of when the referee blows the ready for play whistle after the ball has been spotted. No direct hand-off snaps are allowed. The ball must be snapped with a quick, continuous motion. If the ball is snapped before the Referee whistles the ball ready for play, it is considered a delay of the game. A snap over the quarterback's head or past the quarterback is an automatic dead ball where it hits the ground. A snap along the ground may be fielded cleanly by the quarterback and play will continue. If not fielded cleanly, it is a dead ball where the quarterback first touched the ball.

First Downs: Each team will have a series of four downs to advance the ball from one zone to another. Failure to do so in four downs results in loss of the ball to the opponent. The line to gain in any series shall be the line in advance of the ball, unless the distance has been lost due to penalty or loss of yardage. The placement of the ball will be determined by the location of the ball carrier's flags/hips are when the person is de-flagged.

No run zone: There will be a "no run zone" that extends from the goal line to the 5-yard line. Any play that starts from the 5-yard line or closer (including a 1-point try after a touchdown) **MUST** be a pass. Violations will incur a 5-yard penalty.

Motion: When the ball is snapped, only one offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the line of scrimmage. A player in motion on the line of scrimmage will not be one of the four scrimmage line players.

False Start: Offensive players (except the player in motion) must be stationary in their positions without movement of the feet, body, head, or arms for at least one full second before the snap.

Stripping, hitting, or stealing the Ball: An opponent may **NOT** snatch, strip, or steal the ball from the ball carrier's hand. There will be a ten-yard penalty against a team that strips or

attempts to strip a ball.

Neutral Zone: There will be a five (5) yard separation between the offensive line of scrimmage (point of the ball) and the defensive line of scrimmage. There will be cones that designate both the offensive and defensive lines of scrimmage. EXCEPTION: if the offense begins a play inside the opponent's 5-yard line, the defensive line of scrimmage will be the goal line.

Encroachment (Off sides): An Offensive or defensive team may not penetrate neutral zone (line of scrimmage) or it is encroachment and a five-yard penalty and an immediate dead ball. If the defense gets back before the snap of the ball, AND does not cause the offense to false start, it is not a penalty.

Pass Interference: Penalty for offensive/defensive pass interference is a spot foul OR ten yards from line of scrimmage (whichever is GREATER) and an automatic first down if defensive, and loss of down if offensive.

Passing/Receiving: All players (except the passer) are eligible to receive a pass. Only one forward pass is allowed per play. Lateral/backward passes may be thrown at any time. When catching the ball along a sideline or endline, receivers must have one foot in bounds while in possession of the ball to be considered a legal catch. A receiver who steps out of bounds and returns back to the playing field is ineligible to participate in that play until the ball is touched by another player.

Scoring:

Touchdown = 6 points for male-to-male (7 points if a female is involved)

Safety = 2 points

Point after TD Option # 1 = 1 point (from 5 yards) (2 points if a female is involved)

Point after TD Option #2 = 2 points (from 10 yards) (3 points if a female is involved)

A team is given one choice (one or two points) for their "try" attempt. The declared point value will remain the same even if penalties move the ball closer or farther from the goal. A team's "try" attempt choice can only be changed by taking a time out before the try is attempted. An interception on a try for an extra point CANNOT be returned.

Female involvement: In order for a team to be awarded extra points for female involvement, a female must pass the ball from behind the line of scrimmage to any other offensive player beyond the line of scrimmage OR a female must gain possession of the ball outside the end zone (via catch, handoff or interception) and carry it into the end zone OR catch the ball in the end zone.

Securing the Flag belt: Defensive players must not tackle, block, trip or hold the ball carrier while attempting to deflag the ball carrier. If a player trips, holds, or uses any other illegal acts, a penalty of ten yards will be called. If flagrant, unnecessary roughness occurs, ejection may also result. Flags must be "clearly taken" from the ball carrier by a defensive player. Always play until you hear the whistle. However, if a player from the opposing team causes the clip on the flag belt to break, the player is down. If a player is found wearing flags that are tucked in or tied to the belt or shorts/pants, it will be an automatic ejection from a game.

Player being down: A player is down at the spot when a defender pulls one of their flags. If a player's flag or flag belt falls off without contact and the ball is thrown to that player, he/she is down upon reception. If a player's flag is pulled by a defender PRIOR to catching the ball, they may still run after the catch. A runner or receiver is also down if any part of his/her body touches the ground other than hands or feet.

Flag Guarding: Runners **MUST** run with **TWO** hands on the ball at all times. The ONLY exception is if there is no other player within 10 yards (referee discretion). Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, body or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove their flags. The ball carrier may **NOT** hurdle, jump or attempt to jump over another player. The player with the ball may **NOT** intentionally dive for a line to gain or end zone, and may not initiate any contact with an opposing player. The penalty would be a ten-yard penalty.

Roughing the passer: When rushing the passer you must play the flag and not the ball. If attempting to block a pass, you may not contact the passer in any manner, even if the ball is touched or blocked. This will result in a ten-yard penalty and an Automatic First Down.

Returns from End Zone: Passes and interceptions may be returned from end zones. An interception in the end zone can be advanced or become a touchback (ball placed on the 15 yard line) if downed or deflagged in the end zone.

Inadvertent Whistle: A live ball becomes dead when an official sounds the whistle, even if inadvertently. *A possessed ball (player is holding the ball) blown dead inadvertently can be replayed totally or taken from the spot of the whistle *A non-possessioned ball (ball in the air) will be brought back to the previous spot and replayed.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are 10 yards. Extreme cases can lead to ejection.

DEFENSE

Any number of rushers is allowed, as long as the rusher begins the play at least **FIVE** yards from the offensive line of scrimmage at the snap.

Both "man-to-man" and "zone" defenses are allowed. There are no restrictions for males guarding females or females guarding males or males rushing female quarterbacks or females rushing male quarterbacks. If a male is guarding a female, he **MUST** allow her to catch the ball before attempting to deflag her. He **MAY NOT** attempt to defend the pass. Infractions will be a spot foul or a 10-yard penalty, whichever is greater. In the event of an obviously overthrown or underthrown pass to a female, a defensive player (male or female) may intercept the ball and return it. This is a judgment call by the referee on the field.

CO-REC RULES SUMMARY (OPEN vs CLOSED PLAYS)

Female Inclusion: During the offensive team's possession, there may not be more than 3 consecutive plays consisting of any combination of legal forward pass attempts from a male passer to a male receiver or rushing attempts by male or female players. If a team has 3 consecutive plays of any of the above combinations, the following play is "closed" and MUST consist of a legal forward pass attempt involving either a female passer or a female receiver BEYOND the line of scrimmage. During a "closed" play, a male ball-carrier running across the line of scrimmage or a male-to-male pass completion will be counted as an incomplete

pass. It is the referee's sole discretion whether or not a pass thrown to a female is a legitimate attempt to include her and thus counts as a "female inclusion" play. Passes thrown at the feet of female players, especially repeatedly, may result in an "illegal pass" penalty. There are no restrictions concerning a male passer completing legal forward passes to a female receiver, or female to female, or female to male.

If a female passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver behind the offensive line of scrimmage on either an "open" or "closed" play, and the male receiver runs beyond the line of scrimmage with the ball, the play DOES NOT count as a "female inclusion" play. A female quarterback running past the line of scrimmage also does not count as a "female inclusion" play. Offensive penalties also have no effect on the female inclusion rule. If three consecutive downs are played and no female has been included and a punt ensues, a female MUST punt the ball.

TIE GAME (playoffs only)

Tie Breaker and Sudden Death: The tiebreaker will begin with an explanation of the rules and a coin toss. The winning team will choose either to go on offense first or to defend the goal. Unless moved by penalty, each team will start 1st and goal from the 30 yard line (midfield). The object will be to score as many points as possible. A tiebreaker period consists of one series of 4 downs by each team (no first downs). The female inclusion rule applies during each set of 4 downs (if 3 consecutive non-female inclusion plays are run, the 4th play is a "closed" play). If the first team that is awarded the ball scores and has plays remaining, they may re-start from the 30 yard line and try to score again. The opponent will still have a chance to match the score(s). Unless moved by penalty, the opponent will also start 1st and goal from the 30 yard line (midfield). Try-for-points will be attempted and scored as indicated in the rules (and will NOT count towards a team's 4 downs). If the defense intercepts the ball, the offense's series is over and the ball will be placed at the 30 yard line to begin the opponent's series of 4 downs. If the score is still tied after one series of downs, repeat as above until one team wins. On each offense's first possession, upon scoring a touchdown they may elect to attempt a 1-point try (from the 5-yard line) or 2-point try (from the 10-yard line). On the second and succeeding possessions, any touchdown must be accompanied by a 2-point try (from the 10-yard line).

Playoffs & Seeding

The top 16 teams will make the playoffs. Teams will be awarded 3 points for a win, 1 point for a tie and 0 points for a loss. In the event of multiple teams having earned the same number of regular season points, seeding will be based on 1) head-to-head matchups, 2) team with the most number of wins, 3) point differential, then 4) coin flip.

Summary of Penalties

Loss of 5 yards

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Required equipment worn illegally. ▪ Illegal forward pass (also loss of down). ▪ Infraction of protected scrimmage kicks ▪ False start. ▪ Infraction of scrimmage formation. ▪ Illegal snap. ▪ Aiding runner by teammates. ▪ Illegal Substitution. ▪ Less than required number of players on the scrimmage line at the snap. ▪ Player receiving snap within 4 yards of scrimmage line. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delay of Game (Dead Ball Foul). ▪ False Start (Dead Ball Foul). ▪ Encroachment (Dead Ball Foul). ▪ Illegal Snap (Dead Ball Foul). ▪ Illegal Procedure. ▪ Illegal Motion. ▪ Illegal Shift. ▪ Illegally handing the ball forward (loss of down). ▪ Illegal forward pass (loss of down). ▪ Running play inside "no run zone." |
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Loss of 10 yards

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contact before or after ball is dead. ▪ Kick/catch interference. ▪ Unnecessary contact of any nature. ▪ Drive or run into player. ▪ Forward pass interference - Offensive (loss of down). ▪ Forward pass interference - Defensive (automatic 1st down). ▪ Illegally secured flag belt on touchdown (loss of down). ▪ Illegal flag belt removal. ▪ Position upon shoulder or body of player to gain advantage. ▪ Unsportsmanlike Conduct player, team, spectator. ▪ Tackling runner. ▪ Spiking, kicking, throwing, not returning ball to the official. ▪ Guarding the flag belt, Flag Guarding (from spot of foul). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Roughing the passer (automatic 1st down). ▪ Stealing, striking, or attempting to steal the ball. ▪ Illegal offensive screen blocking or downfield blocking. ▪ Tripping an opponent. ▪ Clipping. ▪ Interlocked interference. ▪ Contact with opponent on the ground. ▪ Defensive use of hands. ▪ Throwing runner to the ground. ▪ Hurdling any player. ▪ Stiffening arm. ▪ Charging. ▪ Obstruction of runner. ▪ Personal Foul. ▪ Illegal participation. ▪ Re-entry of disqualified player. |
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