

FREDERICK COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
OFFICIAL RULE BOOK
CO-ED FLAG FOOTBALL



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RULES

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I. FCP&R Adult Leagues

1. All players must sign the FCP&R Adult Leagues Code of Conduct/Waiver form before playing in any game.
2. All players must be signed up by the deadline stated for their specific league in the recreater.com
 - a. Any players registering after the deadline must pay a \$20 late fee.
 - b. Any refunds for the adult leagues must be made prior to the listed league registration deadline.
 - c. Players may not be added to the rosters after the third game has been played.
 - d. In the case of an injured player, ONE new player may be added with the approval of the League Director to replace that injured player, who will then no longer be able to participate in the league. Any injury replacements must occur prior to the last game of the regular season.
 - e. Guest players, or borrowed players, may only be obtained from paid players within the same league and division to meet field or gender minimum. No guest or borrowed players may be used during playoffs.
3. ID checks will occur the at the first game and sporadically throughout the season to make sure teams are compliant
4. Refrain from the use of profanity or obscene gestures.
5. Any team that forfeits two games will be dropped from the league.

II. Game

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
6. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
7. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

III. Terminology

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Boundary Lines | the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines, and back of the end zone lines. |
| Line Of Scrimmage | (LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field. |
| Line-To-Gain | the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score. |
| Rush Line | an imaginary line running across the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage. |
| Offense | the squad with possession of the ball. |
| Defense | the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball. |
| Passer | the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback. |
| Rusher | the defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass. |
| Possession | the team having control of the ball and trying to score during a play or overall series of downs |
| Downs (1-2-3-4) | the offensive squad has four attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score. |
| Live Ball | refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties, live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete. |
| Dead Ball | refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play. |
| Whistle | sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, half time, or the end of the game. |
| Inadvertent Whistle | official's whistle that is performed in error. |
| Charging | the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest. |
| Flag Guarding | an act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head, or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm. |
| Shovel Pass | a legal pass attempted by pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner. |
| Lateral | a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier. Laterals are permitted in this league. |

Unsportsmanlike Conduct a rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

Gender Play

a female player must pass the ball (pass must cross the line of scrimmage to satisfy gender play), be the primary ball carrier (gain the majority of yards in the play), or be the target of a thrown pass (Based on officials judgment.) Once every three downs, the gender play **does not** reset when you get a first down. PAT's are excluded from using the gender play.

IV. Eligibility

1. All players must sign the Code of Conduct Agreement and Waiver for FCP&R leagues before participating.

V. Equipment

1. The league provides each player with a flag belt for games. Flags must be returned to league official after game is complete. Teams may use the football provided by the league. Or a football approved by the head official. (NFL or college sized ball is required. Ball must be inflated.)

2. Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed, however cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.

3. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and knee pads. Braces or pads with exposed metals, or hard exteriors, are not allowed. Casts must be bubble wrapped and approved by referee.

4. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous

5. Players' jerseys **must be tucked into the pants** if they hang below the belt line.

6. Each Team is responsible for providing their own jerseys. Jerseys must have, at the very least, a number on the back.

7. If teams jerseys are same color, the visiting teams must switch to pennies.

8. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped. **No player can wear white or yellow shorts. Game day flags are white or yellow.** Officials may change the flag color for any player as needed and if available.

VI. Field

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards. However, field size may vary based on field availability for each league.

2. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zone (a 5 yard imaginary zone before midfield and end zones), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.

VIII. FORFEITS

1. Games will be forfeited 14 minutes after running clock start time if a team cannot field 5 players. At minimum one of those players must be female.
2. If a team is waiting on a player, the game clock starts at the designated game time. And when player is ready the 1st half will continue from the time they step on the field. The 1st half will be abbreviated due to the team being short players.

IX. Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 44 minute continuous clock with two- 22 minute halves. The clock stops only for timeouts.
2. Halftime is three minutes long.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball. Referee must also set the 7yd rush line prior to starting play clock. Teams may receive warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
4. Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.
5. In the last minute of the 2nd half, the clock will stop on change of possessions and PATs.
6. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
7. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
8. An overtime (OT) Period will be used to determine a winner. OT format is as follows:
 - a. Each team gets one possession (and possibly more pending penalty enforcement) starting from mid-field.
 - i. First possession choice goes to the winner of regulation coin toss.
 - ii. There is no Sudden Death; each team gets a minimum of one possession.
 - b. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - c. There are no time-outs.
 - d. Each team will be allowed a maximum of two possessions before a tie is declared.
 1. In the case of an interception, the ball will be marked at either the line of scrimmage or the point where the defender's flags were pulled, whichever is the more advantageous spot to the defense.
 2. If Team B intercepts the ball and returns it for a touchdown, Team B wins.
 - e. Scoring – Same as regulation. The team with the most points wins.

X. Scoring

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points
2. **PAT (Point After Touchdown)** 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (12-yard line) Note: 1 point PAT is pass only, 2 point PAT can be run or pass.
 - a. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt. conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-pt. conversion (from the 12-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
 - b. Gender play does not apply to PATs
3. **Safety:** 2 points

A Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A Safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone. If a dead-ball takes place in the end zone it is ruled a safety (for example – an errant snap goes over the head of the QB and the ball lands in the endzone. would be ruled a safety)
4. **Mercy Rule:** There is no mercy rule.

XI. Coaches

1. Coaches are not allowed on the field.
2. Coaches are expected to adhere to FCPR coaching guidelines and codes of conduct.

XII. Live Ball / Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.

7. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - b. The ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball carrier’s flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires. (ref will give hand signal for each second)
 - i. Inadvertent whistle.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s feet were at the time of the fumble.

8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down is consumed.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

9. Officials are charged with making judgment calls on many different plays and aspects of the game. Therefore the official(s) has the right to review his/her call or ruling prior to the next down played.

XIII . Running

1. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier has the ball. (It is no longer based on front foot.)
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player that receives the snap.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. “Center Sneak” play is not allowed.
4. Laterals and pitches are allowed
5. “No-Run Zones,” located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run Zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
6. The player who takes the handoff or lateral/pitch can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
7. Once the ball has been handed off or lateral/pitch, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
8. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
9. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.

10. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.

11. No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.

12. Offensive players should stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No attempt to obstruct the defender in pursuit of the ball carrier is allowed. (Running down field with the ball carrier while obstructing a defender is considered screening and is illegal).

13. Flag Obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player’s hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

XIV. Passing

1. **All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage and thrown forward.**

2. Shovel passes are allowed.

3. The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule no longer is in effect.

a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS). (not ruled a safety)

XV. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback).

2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage.

3. A player must have at least **one foot inbounds** when making a reception.

4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.

6. Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.

XVI. Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer **must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.** Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.

2. Once the ball is handed off or a lateral/pitch, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.

3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.

a. A legal rush is:

- i. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
- ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off or lateral/pitch by the quarterback.
- iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7 yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
- iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off or lateral/pitch before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.

b. A penalty may be called if:

- i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).
- ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Offside (5 yards LOS).
- iii. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).

c. Special circumstances:

- i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, seven second clock in effect.
- ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play, however if they do send a rusher, the rusher must check in with the official.
- iii. If rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as defender with no offside penalty enforced.

4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.

5. Impeding the rusher: The offense cannot impede the rusher in anyway. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the QB, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. This direct "path or line" to the QB is determined by where the defender and QB are lined up pre snap. If this line is occupied by an offensive player, then it is the offensive's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, it is the rusher's responsibility to avoid them.

6. A defensive rusher that initiates contact with an offensive player will receive an unnecessary conduct penalty and the player and head coach may be ejected based on the severity of the contact.

7. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when flag is pulled.

a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

XVII. Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.

2. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.

3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.

4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand/ball, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the jersey. A player's running motion is not a justification to flag guard.

XVIII. Formations

1. Offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion.
 - b. No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.
3. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
4. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

XIX. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee may give warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship, as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.

7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:
- Keep younger kids and equipment a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area. Coolers, Chairs, Tents are not allowed on the turf field surface.
 - The Turf Field Area is a water only area.** No sports drinks, food, coffee, or any other drinks allowed on the Turf Field Area.
 - Stay in the end zone or sideline area, not between fields.

XX. Penalties

i. General

- The referee will call all penalties.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (spot fouls)
- Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question judgment calls.
- Games may not end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- Referees have the option to sit a player 4 plays, 8 plays, or for the rest of the half for poor sportsmanship or unnecessary roughness.**

ii. Spot Fouls

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|--|---|
| Defensive Pass Interference | Automatic First Down |
| Defensive Holding on Ball Carrier | + 10yards & Automatic First Down |
| Stripping | + 10 yards & Automatic First Down |
| Defensive Unnecessary Roughness | + 10 yards & Automatic First Down |
| Screening | - 10 yards & Loss of Down |
| Flag Guarding | -10 yards & Loss of Down |

iii. Defensive Penalties

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|--|---|
| Offside | + 5 yards from LOS |
| Illegal Rush (starting rush from inside 7-yd mark) | + 5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down |
| Illegal Flag Pull (before receiver has ball) | + 5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down |
| Holding of Receiver running pattern | + 5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down |
| Roughing the Passer | + 10 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down |
| Taunting | + 10 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down |
| Defensive Pass Interference | SPOT FOUL, Automatic First Down |
| Holding of Ball Carrier | SPOT FOUL, +10yards & Automatic First Down |
| Stripping | SPOT FOUL +10 yards and Automatic First Down |
| Defensive Unnecessary Roughness | SPOT FOUL +10 yards and Automatic First Down |

iv. Offensive Penalties

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|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Offside / False Start | - 5 yards from LOS |
|-----------------------|--------------------|

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| Illegal Forward Pass (QB throws after stepping across LOS) | - 5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down |
| Offensive Pass Interference | - 5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down |
| Illegal Motion (more than 1 player moving) | - 5 yards from LOS |
| Delay of game | - 5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down |
| Blocking | - 10 yards from LOS & Loss of Down |
| Charging | - 10 yards from LOS & Loss of Down |
| Impeding the Rusher | - 10 yards from LOS & Loss of Down |
| Offensive Unnecessary Roughness | - 10 yards from LOS & Loss of Down |
| Screening | SPOT FOUL - 10 yards & Loss of Down |
| Flag Guarding | SPOT FOUL -10 yards & Loss of Down |

Weather Policies and Cancellation Information

Games may be played rain or shine. However, certain inclement weather situations may cause us to postpone and/or cancel games. When inclement weather is forecasted you should call our **Program Status Line (see below)** before leaving for your game/practice location.

Program Status Line 301.600.6291 (updated only if an activity is cancelled) We do not update the line to let you know if games are running. If the cancellation does not state it is cancelled then it is running as scheduled)



Thunderstorms & Lightning

“When Thunder Roars, Get Indoors.” FCPR Staff and Volunteers will suspend or postpone activities if a thunderstorm appears imminent before or during outdoor activities. If thunder can be heard, lightning is close enough to be a hazard and everyone should head to a safe location immediately. Allowing sufficient time for individuals to safely evacuate the premises must be taken into consideration by staff and volunteers. All activities will be suspended until 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder is heard. This 30-minute clock restarts each time thunder is heard. Spectator and participants will be directed to the nearest safe location which in many instances will be their vehicles. Participants and spectators should only make their way back to a venue after an “all-clear” from FCPR Staff.

Default strategy for Tornadoes/Wind

If a Tornado Warning is issued, by the National Weather Service, for the Frederick area (or in the absence of a warning - a severe weather alert is received), all activity (practice and/or competition) will be stopped immediately and/or cancelled. All participants, game officials, athletics

staff and spectators will be prior informed or relocated according to the procedures outlined for each venue or to the nearest safest location. Once the warning is lifted the activity can resume provided the playing area is safe for all players and spectators.



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