2026 WCFL FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

OFFICIAL'S AUTHORITY: An official assumes authority 15 minutes before the scheduled game time and until they have left the field. The officials have the authority to rule on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. His/her discretion is final unless ruled otherwise by the supervisor on duty. The official has the right to eject players, parents, and coaches from the game or have a player sit out for part or all of the game. Fans, coaches, parents, and spectators are a part of the team, and any fouls they commit will go against the team.

CODE OF CONDUCT: Every WCFL Board Member, coach, player, parent, and guest is bound by the WCFL Code of Conduct that was signed in order for their child's participation in the league.

For clarification, illegal equipment consists of:

A. Headgear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material, including billed hats or items containing exposed knots.
B. Jewelry
C. Pads or braces worn above the waist, and no casts of any kind.
D. Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in, or detachable cleats. Only EXCEPTION: Screw-in cleats are allowed if the screw is part of the cleat.
E. Shirts or jerseys that DO NOT remain tucked in. Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt that does not remain tucked in.
F. Pants or shorts with any belt(s), belt loop(s), pockets(s), or exposed drawstring(s).
G. Leg and knee braces made of hard and/or unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped. No exposed Metal.
H. Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on equipment or exposed parts of the body.
I. Exposed metal on clothes or a person. This includes eyeglasses.
J. Towels that are attached to the player's waist. If a player is wearing a towel during a play and it is pulled, it is considered a pulled flag, and the play is over.
K. Eyeglasses must be clear and must be sports glasses with a prescription. No metal. No sunglasses or tint (unless medically necessary and pre-approved by the league).

ON THE FIELD COACHING: <u>ONLY the Ultimate & Girls Jr. Divisions</u> are allowed to have their coaches on the field for coaching.

- Coaches (one per team) shall be allowed in the huddle on both offense and defense for the entire game in Ultimate.
- On-field coaches should limit their coaching to their teams and refrain from discussing officiating. If an on-field coach receives an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty while on the field, he must go to the bench for the remainder of the game, but can be replaced by another coach on the field.

COACH – AST COACH - TEAM PARENT: ONLY 3 non-players (mix of coaches and team parent) are allowed inside the fence with the team (with the exception of a parent from the visiting team to hold the BOX). Coaches and team parents are required to complete background checks at the VOW.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS: Each team should start the game with 7 players: a minimum of 5 is needed to avoid a forfeit. A player can only play on one team.

LENGTH OF GAME: Playing time shall be 40 minutes, separated into two halves of 20 minutes and a 5-minute halftime.

- There will be a running clock for the entire first half and the first 18 minutes of the second half.
- The last 2 minutes of the second half will follow NIRSA timing rules (similar to NCAA Football)
- A coin toss will determine who shall receive the choice of possession or side at the beginning of the game.

GAME CLOCK:

- Stoppage will occur only for injuries, timeouts, and water breaks.
- Normal operation with official stoppage required by rule shall commence in the last two minutes of the 2nd half.
- **TIMEOUTS**:
    - A Player or the Head Coach can call a timeout.
    - Two Timeouts per half.

PLAY CLOCK- 40 seconds from the completion of the previous play (45 seconds in Ultimate/Prep).

OVERTIME PLAY: During the regular season, each team will have one play of the ball from the 5 or 10-yard line.

- The winner of the coin toss shall elect between offense, defense, or the end of the field.
- If a team scores from the 5-yard line, the team will be awarded 1Point.
- If the team scores from the 10-yard line, it will be awarded 2 pts.
- If the 1st team scores, then the 2nd team must go for 2 from the 10-yard line.
- The game can end in a tie if neither team scores or both teams convert a 2-point conversion.
- No 3-point conversation allowed in OT

Playoff Overtime Play - Each team will get a series of downs from the 10-yard line for Ultimate/Prep/Girls Jr. divisions and 20-yard line for the Varsity/Pro/HS Prep/Girls Sr. Divisions, and will alternate possessions until a winner is determined. Regular Extra point rules apply.

MERCY RULE: At the two-minute mark, if a team is ahead by **19 points** or more when the referee announces the two-minute warning for the second half, the game shall be over.

SCORING

- **Touchdown** – 6 points
- **Safety** – 2 points
- **Extra Point** - After scoring a touchdown, the offense can elect to go for 1, 2, or 3; however, once the ball is set, it can only be changed by using a timeout
    - 1 point – 5-yard line

- 2 point – 10-yard line
- 3 point – 20-yard line

KICKING GAME: NO KICKS - Teams will begin each half and after each score at the 30-yard line unless moved by a penalty.

- **Punting Rule:** A team may call for a punt, and the ball will be moved 30 yards down the field from the line of scrimmage
- **Inside the 40:** If the ball is inside the opponent's 40-yard line, the "punt" shall be marked off half the distance to the goal.
- **Ultimate** punt equals 15 yards

ONSIDE CONVERSION:

- If a team is trailing and scores with 2 minutes or less remaining in the game, and they are still trailing by 9 points or fewer, they can elect to attempt an onside conversion.
- The ball is placed on their own 20-yard line, and they are given 1 play (with the clock not running) to cross the 40-yard line.
- If the conversion is made, the play is whistled dead, and they retain the ball starting on their own 30-yard line and begin regular play.
- If the play is not converted, the opposing team is given the ball on the opponents 30YL, and regular play continues

LINE OF SCRIMMAGE: The offensive team **does not have a minimum number of players** to set the line of scrimmage at the snap.

- Once the center has placed his hands on the ball, no offensive or defensive player may enter the neutral zone before the snap.
- The "defensive" line of scrimmage will be 5 yards off the ball, designated by the official
- When the first down or defending End Zone is less than 5 yards, the defense must line up on the 1st down line or the goal line to stop the offense.

PUTTING THE BALL IN PLAY - (Snap Rules)

- Snap can be between the legs or a side snap.
- Snap must be a single continuous motion from the ground to the QB (no lift and hand).
- Any player receiving the snap must be 2 yards off the line of scrimmage when they receive the snap (including the QB). This includes a player in motion or a stationary player directly behind the center. **No Under Center Snaps**

EXTENSION OF BALL: When the runner's flag is pulled, the ball shall be spotted at the forward-most point of the football (i.e., the runner can extend the ball forward).

BACKWARD PASSES AND FUMBLES: Any ball that is fumbled during a down will be dead by rule once it has touched the ground

- A backward pass or fumble may be caught or intercepted by any player inbounds and advanced.
- A player may not intentionally throw a backward pass out of bounds to conserve time or to avoid being downed; in such an event, the clock shall continue to run (if in the last two minutes of the game).
- Once a ball has touched the ground, the ball is considered dead.

FORWARD PASSES AND INTERCEPTIONS: If a player is in the air attempting to catch a ball, the player must contact the ground with at least one-foot in-bounds with the ball in their possession before going out of bounds**.**

- If possession of the ball is lost simultaneously upon contact with the ground, it is **not a catch.**
- **Only one forward pass is permitted in WCFL flag football**

PASS INTERFERENCE: Any player contact that, in the view of the official, interferes with the attempt to catch a pass (offensive or defensive) is pass interference unless, in the view of the official, it occurs when two or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass.

- It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is de-flagged or touched before touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the offensive line of scrimmage.

FIRST DOWNS: First downs are accomplished by crossing "zones". They are marked by white lines and are evenly spaced across the playing field.

1. First down zones are marked 20 yards apart
2. If the offense is within 5 yards of a first down or the goal line, the defense will line up just behind the line. (This is referred to as a "Short Rush")
3. Four downs to get a first down or score a touchdown when inside the 20-yard goal zone

SAFETY: If a player carrying the ball across the goal line they are defending and the ball becomes dead, it is a Safety.

- If a team commits a foul in the end zone, and the spot of the enforcement is designated as the spot of the foul, it is a safety.
- **A team recording a safety will receive 2 points, and the ball shall be snapped by the scoring team at their own 30-yard line, unless moved by a penalty.**

PERSONAL FOULS: An act listed below or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul, Players shall not:

- Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
- Trip an opponent.
- Throw the runner to the ground.
- Hurdle another player.
- Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead
- Make any contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary.
- Drive or run into a defensive player.
- Intentionally dive to gain yardage.

- Clip an opponent.
- Position themselves on a teammate's or opponent's shoulders to gain an advantage.
- Tackle the runner (Warrants ejection)
- A player may be disqualified from further participation in any contest if, in the opinion of the official(s), such player commits any personal foul or multiple personal fouls with excessive force.
- In place of player disqualification for personal foul(s) and/or unsportsmanlike conduct, any official may place a player in a "Cool Down Period", which shall require the player to be removed from the contest for a period of no less than five (5) minutes (as determined by the Game Clock).

IMPEDING THE RUSHER/SCREENING - The offensive player cannot impede a rusher in any way. Rushers have the right to a clear path to the quarterback (even as the quarterback may move), regardless of where they line up before the snap. If the path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offensive player's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption of the rusher's path or contact with the rusher will result in an "impeding the rusher/Screening" penalty.

*The **only exception** is if the offensive player **does not move** after the ball is snapped. Then it is the "Rushers" responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.

STIFF ARMING: Stiff arming is not allowed; a personal foul will be called, and, if warranted, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty or ejection will result.

OBSTRUCTING THE RUNNER: A defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of the runner when attempting to remove the flag belt.

THE FLAG BELT: All shirts must be tucked in, and are not permitted to hang over the flag-belt.

- **Flags worn must be the WCFL flags,** no exceptions.
- Should a player lose their flag belt legally or illegally during a down, and should that player gain possession of a live ball, that player will be considered down when a legal tag (one hand touched by the defense between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm) is made.
- **IF THE BELT HAS BEEN ILLEGALLY SECURED,** the score is disallowed, the player is ejected, and a 10-yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty will be administered from the succeeding spot.
- Players must have touched the ball before they can legally be deflagged.
- It is illegal for a defensive player to intentionally pull a flag from an offensive player who does not have the ball. In cases where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty of the play (Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards).

GUARDING THE FLAG BELT: Runners shall not flag guard by using any part of the body or ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. Flag guarding includes, but is not limited to:

- Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that flag guards.
- **Spinning and Jumping ARE ALLOWED, so long as the offensive player does not create undue contact with the defense; in such an event, it is a personal foul.**

ROUGHING THE PASSER – Any contact to the QB (above the waist) outside of legally pulling the flag, including but not limited to hitting his passing arm and/or hand, is considered roughing the passer and is an automatic first down in addition to the enforced yards for the foul

OFFENSIVE LIVE BALL FOUL – When a live ball foul is committed by the offense (ex., screening, flag guarding, etc.), the foul is enforced, and it is an automatic **loss of down**.

OFFENSIVE DEAD BALL FOUL – After a dead-ball foul is committed by the offense (ex., false start, illegal motion, etc.), the foul is enforced, and the down is replayed.

NO HUDDLE RULE - Teams can proceed to snap the ball without huddling.

CLOCKING THE BALL (snapping the ball and QB immediately throws ball onto the ground) – In the final two minutes of the game, the offensive team can "clock the ball" to stop the clock so long as the quarterback takes an immediate snap and throws an immediate forward pass into the ground.

****MUST PLAY RULE****

All players are expected to play half of the game. For each half, a player should be on Defensive or Offensive.

- They will play the entire half on that side of the ball unless they are injured, being disciplined, or emotionally unable to play.
- To maintain compliance, every change of possession, a team's sideline must be cleared with the change of players, unless a player is injured, being disciplined, or emotionally unable to play.
- The Officials do not monitor this rule. If a coach suspects a violation of this rule by the opposing coach, they are to summon a WCFL Board Member to the fields for evaluation.
- If a Coach is found to be in violation, an automatic suspension will take place for the next game.
- If a player will be present but is not expected to play, or is expected to have only limited play for any reason (injured, sick, consistently misses practice, being disciplined, etc.), the coach must first discuss the situation with the parent and, second, make the division commissioner aware before the game.

GAME BALLS - A Wilson GST or equivalent Football

- ULT, PREP & GIRLS JR – **Peewee/K2**
- VARSITY – **Junior/TDJ**
- PRO & GIRLS SR – **Youth/TDY**
- HS PREP - **Official**

SIDELINES: The player box will be 1 yard off the sidelines. The coaches' box is from the 20 to the 20

No parent or fans are permitted INSIDE THE FENCE DURING A GAME. Access must be authorized with credentials.

No photographers are permitted inside the fence unless authorized by the WCFL.

FIELDS 80 YARDS BY 40 YARDS

MOUTHPIECE: All players must wear a mouthpiece to participate.

UNIFORMS: Players are to wear only WCFL-issued uniforms, which include game-issued flags. Uniform includes:

- WCFL issued jersey
- Shorts or pants with no pockets – (preferably black in color)
- Mouthpiece
- Approved Cleats

In addition:

- **Shorts/pants <u>cannot</u> have pockets, belt loops, or exposed strings. TAPE OVER POCKETS DOES NOT MAKE THE UNIFORM LEGAL.**
- Jerseys cannot cover the flags; they must be tucked in if too long.
- No Towels, Hats, jewelry, or bands of any kind are to be worn.
- **PLAY BANDS ARE ALLOWED TO BE WORN (ON THE WRIST ONLY).**

GAMEDAY REQUIREMENTS

- Teams with the day's first game will help with field setup.
- Last Game teams to help with Field Breakdown.
- The home team is to select a parent to run the scoreboard from the press box.
- The visiting team is responsible for getting a parent to hold the BOX (down marker/stick).
- Please clean the bench area after your game.
- Post-game team meetings should be held away from the field and bench area.