



Rules and Code of Conduct

Coaches and Referees Guide

Bantam, Junior, and Senior Divisions

August 2011 - Final

CYFFA strives to maintain an environment of safety, fun, instruction, and fair play. Rules and guidelines detailed in this document cannot possibly cover every possible situation that may arise on the field, so it is requested that all participants stay grounded in the fact that this is 8 on 8 flag football - no scholarships on the line, no signing bonuses at risk, no reason to be "over the top" with emotion or gamesmanship. We take pride in the growth and prosperity of the league and we thank you in advance for your support.

History of Revisions

2008

Clarified rules for player formation in a shorthanded game. Specifically, a "seven vs seven" situation - pages 7 and 32.

Added Paragraph 2.10 with language to address "spot of the foul" placement of the ball after a penalty on the offense - page 20.

Clarified rules on encroachment - specifically, when defense jumps into the neutral zone and pulls the offense out of their stance, the penalty is against the defense - pages 24 and 27.

Allowing kicks to be returned out of the end zone for bantams, juniors, and seniors - this is a change from previous years - pages 28, 29, 30, and 31.

Simplified overtime rules for Bowl Games - they are the same as regular season games - page 33.

2009 - no changes

2010

Paragraph 2.6 (Blocking) - page 17 - eliminated references to a "free blocking zone" and simplified the rules on blocking in the back - basically, blocking in the back is not allowed regardless of whether the direction of the play has been established or not.

Paragraph 5.3 (Overtime) - page 33 - changed to "one possession only, each team" for regular season games.

2011

Paragraph 1.1 (page 7) and Paragraph 5.4 (page 34) - created a "restricted sideline zone" from the goal line out to the 10 yard line - coaches, players, and spectators are not allowed in this area during the course of the game.

Paragraph 5.9 (page 38) - modified language to the unsportsmanlike conduct penalties to add an interim step

(and five yard penalty) for a "coach or sideline warning" - this is similar to a yellow card to other sports. There will be only one warning.

Paragraph 2.6 (page 18) - added some additional language to extended arm blocking - specifically, an overly aggressive shove, especially on a running play, like you might see in tackle football is not encouraged and may result in a penalty (after a warning) if deemed to be unsafe.

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1.0 Conduct of the Game

The most basic concept for the game of flag football is for the ball carrier to advance the ball without having his/her flags pulled by a defender. Flag football is not tackle football; it is not power football. It is a different concept in that the defense and offense strive for speed, quickness, deception and agility to defeat the opponent. As such, there are rules in place to help minimize the high speed collisions that are integral to tackle football. There is contact in CYFFA, to be sure, but rules are in place to confine that contact and reduce the chance for injury. The overriding factor in referee or coaching decisions shall be the safety of the participants.

1.1 Field Preparations, Setups & Clean up:

The **HOME** team of the first game of the day, as noted on the official schedule, shall be responsible for the set up of its field that it is to play on. This shall include lining of the field boundaries, placement of the end zone markers, field markers (G,10,20,30,40), first down markers. Failure to do so will result in the assessment of a **15-yard penalty** on the opening kick-off AND 2nd half kick-off.

At the end of every game, each team shall be responsible for picking up trash on its sideline and the emptying of trash cans to an area designated by a CYFFA Board Member.

The **HOME** team playing the last game of the day, as noted on the official schedule, shall be responsible for returning all field equipment to an area designated by CYFFA, including field markers, end-zone markers, chains, paint wagons.. Failure to do so will result in the assessment of a **15-yard penalty** on the opening kick-off AND 2nd half kick-off in the next game.

A. Playing Field and Yard Lines:

The regulation dimensions shall be 80 yds. X 40 yds. Plus 10 yd. end zones. The eight playing zones shall be 10 yds long. CYFFA reserves the right to make field changes and will notify all coaches of any such changes.

The kickoff line is the 35 yard line. The receiving teams restraining line is the 35 yard line.

After a Touchback or Safety, the ball shall be put in play from the 15 yard line.

Extra points may be tried from the 2 ½ yard line (1 point) or the 5 yard line (2 points). Extra points may be placed at center field or 10 yards from center in either direction.

Coaches, players, and spectators are permitted along the sidelines as long as they retain decorum and do not yell at players to disrupt play. There is a "restricted zone" on the sidelines from the goal line to the 10 yard line where only the officiating crew or Board members are allowed to stand during play.

Chain and down markers are to be moved when directed by the Linesman (Referee) only.

During the change of goals at a quarter, the chain shall not be moved until the Linesman has determined the proper yard line of the ball and the sticks.

A measurement may be requested by the captain or coach anytime; however, the Head Ref may deny the request if considered obviously frivolous.

1.2 Equipment and Team Personnel

A. Equipment:

The following equipment is mandatory: Mouthpieces, knee pads, helmet, flags and flag belt, socks and rubber athletic cleats. Eye wear protection (sports glasses) for those players wearing glasses and soft athletic supporters for males are highly recommended.

Spikes, removable cleats, metal baseball cleats or street shoes of any kind are prohibited. Rubber cleated athletic shoes must be worn. Bare feet or stocking feet will not be allowed.

Pads of any kind except for knee pads are prohibited. Only helmets approved by CYFFA will be permitted.

No jewelry or gloves are permitted.

CYFFA will provide flags and flag belts. Altering of CYFFA flags/flag belts or wearing flags/flag belts not provided by CYFFA will not be tolerated and subject to penalty.

The official ball shall be provided by the league.

All Players must wear helmets, mouthpieces, and knee pads during the game and practices.

B. Players:

Any basic formation of eight players is permitted, but the offense must have five players on the line, three in the backfield. Those players lining up at the end of the line and backfield are eligible pass receivers.

Teams must have at least 6 players to start a game. There must be equal players on both sides. In a shorthanded situation, it is the ball handlers on offense that are initially impacted. For a game of "seven on seven", the offense will deploy with a center and three players on the line, and a QB and two players in the backfield. One player on the end of the line is an eligible receiver (along with the backfield players). For "six on six", there will be a center, two guards, and three in the backfield. In both cases, the center and two guards are mandatory for the offense.

If a shorthanded situation is created because a player was removed from a game for unsportsmanlike conduct, there will be no impact on the opposing team. They will continue to play with a full squad.

If a team goes down to five players, the game is forfeited. Once the referees are on the field, there is a fifteen minute grace period for a coach to field a team. After fifteen minutes a team must field the minimum players or forfeit the game.

1.3 Referee Pre-game introductions and checks

The referee crew will introduce themselves to the respective coaches and inspect each team for compliance with mandatory equipment requirements - helmets, knee pads, mouthpiece, league uniform, rubber cleats, and flags. Any discrepancies noted have to be corrected before the

specific player(s) with the infraction(s) can enter the game. The referees handling the inspection will also take this time to communicate any special instructions to the teams. After completion of pre-game checks, team captains will be summoned to the middle of the field for the coin toss.

1.4 Coin Toss

The **HOME** team makes the call (heads or tails) on the coin toss before the start of the game. The outcome of the coin toss determines which team gets to exercise their option to kick or to receive as the first play of the game. The team not making this first choice (ie, the team that losses the toss) gets to decide direction of play.

A Team that wins the coin toss to open the game may also decide to defer first choice to the other team - meaning, the winning team is more interested to have the kick / receive option in the second half, so they defer their "start of the game" option to the other team.

1.5 Game Clock Management

A. Overview

There are four twelve minute quarters.

There is a fifteen minute break at half time.

Coaches shall be notified when approximately two minutes remain at half time and the end of the game.

Offense has 25 seconds to put the ball in play after it is spotted.

Each team is allowed three time outs per half

Ninety seconds each with a thirty second notification of expiration.

Two time outs for an overtime period.

All members of a team may go to the sideline during a time out. Coaches, but not spectators,

can also go onto the field to meet with their players during a time out.

Each team may seek two conferences with officials without being charged a time out for the purpose of an explanation of a ruling or to seek adjudication. Only the coach requesting the conference is allowed on the field to speak with referees. The opposing coach may join the conference if requested to do so by the referee or the coach originally requesting the conference. Conferences are not a surrogate time out for either team - this is a "coach to referee only" conversation that shall not be overly indulged.

A coach may not consult with any member of the team on the field during a referee conference. The team must remain in the center of the field unless the subject has a bearing for a conference

If a Team has used up their two conferences, an additional request can be made, but if the request for the delay is found to be unjustified, the team will be charged with a time out. If that team is out of time outs, a Delay of Game Penalty shall be charged.

B. Stopping and Starting the Clock

The referee responsible for keeping the clock has to be thoroughly familiar with the rules spelled out below.

The Clock shall not start on a kickoff until the ball has traveled at least 10 yards or been touched by a receiving player. This applies also to ensuing kickoffs following a touchdown.

Clock shall be stopped and restarted at the snap of the following down, when:

1. Team calls a time out.
2. Pass is incomplete.
3. Runner falls or runs out of bounds with the ball & flags.
4. Safety is scored.

5. Live ball (such as a kick) goes out of bounds or over the goal.

Clock shall be stopped and restarted as soon as the ball is ready for play, when:

1. Penalty has occurred and yardage has been accessed.
2. Change of possession.
3. Official's time out for measurement or other action.
4. Coach's conference with officials.
5. Time out for an injury - additional provisions below:

Injury time outs shall be called by an official when they notice an injured player (official time out).

There is no minimum time.
Player must be removed for at least one play.
Coaches may not confer with any player on the field during an injury time out. (violation: illegal procedure).

As soon as the player has been removed from the field, clock shall be restarted.

1.6 Handling the chains (sideline markers):

Each team shall be responsible for handling the sideline markers for one half of the game. Parent volunteers (three required) need to handle the sideline markers and, importantly, take their cue for designating the down and/or moving the chains from the referees on the field only.

Chain and down markers are to be moved only when directed by the Linesman (referee)>

During the change of goals at the end of the first and third quarters, the chains shall not be moved until the referees have determined the proper location for the line of scrimmage in the new direction.

A measurement may be requested by the Team captain or coach at anytime, however, the Head Referee may deny that request if it is considered frivolous or simply a time delay strategy.

1.6 Weather & Field Conditions:

Games shall not be played in inclement weather or unusual weather conditions. Games shall not be played in situations which may endanger player's health and safety. A game may be continued during a drizzle if the temperature remains moderate, but only if the field continues in a condition of adequate footing.

The decision to continue, temporarily suspend or postpone a game rests with the President or Vice-Presidents. In their absence, any board member may make the decision. Park and Rec representatives have absolute authority on all park and rec playing fields. Conejo Valley Unified School District personnel have authority over school district fields.

In the event of questionable weather, head coaches should contact the divisional Vice President who will take direction from the President of the League.

Quick Guide
Summary Table of Penalties, Section 1
start up and conduct of the game

Infraction	Page	Yardage	Additional Comments
Home Team with first game of the day - failure to have the field set up prior to start time	6	15 yards	Assessed on the opening kick off for the first and second half
Failure to clean up sidelines following a game	6	15 yards	Assessed on the opening kick off of the next week's game
Home Team with last game of the day - failure to return all sideline markers, chains, and equipment to the CYFFA trailer after the game	6	15 yards	Assessed on the opening kick off for the first and second half of the following week's game
Entering the game without proper equipment (ie, mouthpiece, knee pads, flags, etc)	7, 8	5 yards	Illegal procedure, repeat the down
Failure to run a play on offense within the 25 second time limit after ball is spotted	9	5 yards	Delay of game, repeat the down
Coaches (or spectators) improperly on the field during time outs or referee conferences	10	5 yards	Illegal procedure, repeat the down
Coaches (or spectators) improperly in the "restricted" sideline zone during plays inside the 10 yard line.	7	5 yards	Delay of game, repeat the down
Calling a time out when you have already used up your allotment	10	5 yards	Delay of game, repeat the down

2.0 Rules / Penalties on Offense

As stated earlier, the most basic concept for the game of flag football is for the ball carrier to advance the ball without having his/her flags pulled by a defender. The offense can advance the ball by running or passing. The style and pace of play is dependent on the skill level of the team, but in all cases, is managed by the rules detailed below.

2.1 Formations and eligible receivers

Any basic formation of eight players is permitted. Five players on the line, three in the backfield. Those players lining up at the end of the line and backfield are eligible pass receivers.

If playing shorthanded, ie a game with only seven or six players, refer to Section 1.2 (B).

Players line up in a stance similar to a baseball or basketball "ready" position - upright, knees slightly bent, hands on their knees or at their sides in an open posture. Tackle football style, 3 and 4 point stances are prohibited on either side of the line of scrimmage.

Except for the quarterback, no back shall be less than one yard behind the line of scrimmage. The quarterback shall have his hands in position to receive the ball from the center (though he need not receive the ball).

The Center and Guards are not eligible to receive a handoff or pass, unless the line formation puts the Center or a Guard in an end position.

After adjusting the ball, the center may make no further motion of the ball or of his hands on the ball prior to the snap.

Officials must be notified by the coach or captain prior to the employment of an exotic formation when it may not be immediately clear who the eligible pass receivers are. Such notification need not be made when it involves only a shift, leaving a Guard or Center at the end of the line eligible; but must be made when it involves a shift or motion spreading receivers over the field and leading to possible confusion or eligibility.

2.2 Motion and offsides

Only one back may be in motion, and his motion must be laterally or backward along the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap. A player coming in motion from the line and not establishing himself as a backfield player by coming to a full second stop prior to the snap must be at least five (5) yards behind the line at the time of the snap. Only one player may be in motion at the time of the snap.

Except for the man in motion, all players on the offensive team must come to a full second stop without movement of hands, head, feet or body prior to the snap.

Players must line-up at least 5 yards from the sidelines.

Offsides and Encroachment - No member of the offense may enter the neutral zone (defined as one yard off the line of scrimmage for the defense) once the offensive Center has positioned himself over the ball. Except for the Center, no part of the body or any player on either team shall break the plane of the ball. Penalty: 5 yards, repeat down.

Defensive encroachment will be a live ball foul. The offense shall have the choice, after completion of the play, to either accept the penalty (5 yards and repeat the down) or decline the penalty and have the result of the play (it's a free play). The referee shall flag the play, but not whistle the play dead.

2.3 Player Substitutions

A player entering the game shall remain in the game for at least one play.

An extra player on the field at the time of the snap of the ball, a player who enters or exits the game from any other point except his team sideline, or a player who fails to remain in the game for at least one play constitutes Illegal Substitution - Penalty 5 yards.

Offensive substitutions are not allowed without a huddle. Players on offense entering the game without being part of the huddle constitutes a Penalty - 5 yards.

Only 8 players are allowed to break from the huddle at any given time. Penalty-Illegal Substitution, 5 yards

Injury substitutions cannot occur when a play is "live", but can occur without the restrictions described above once play is stopped.

2.4 Ball carrier avoidance of contact

The ball carrier has a responsibility to avoid collisions where the defender has established position - similar to "charging" in basketball, a ball carrier cannot run over a defender in an attempt to gain yards. Penalty - 10 yards.

A runner may not dive or purposely jump in an effort to gain additional yardage. Penalty - 10 yards.

Diving or hurdling over or at an opponent with both feet off the ground is illegal. Penalty constitutes a double diving/hurdling and unnecessary roughness penalty with 10 yards each, plus loss of down.

A player may spin or twirl to avoid contact. These moves are allowed when part of shaking off individual defenders, but not as an uncontrolled or unsafe running style.

A player shall make every effort to avoid a player who has been knocked to the ground and may jump over him if no other means of avoidance is available. He shall not under any circumstance hurdle over the head or neck of an opponent. Penalty - 10 yards.

A ball carrier goes into the line and runs into a defender, or a ball carrier makes a late cut and gets tangled up with a defender - this is a judgment call and unless the runner is reckless and unsafe, there is no penalty.

2.5 Flagging and Flag Guarding

A. General Provisions

Flags must be worn at the waist. Flags cannot be altered in any way. Worn or frayed flags should be replaced. If flags are not available, worn or frayed flags can be used by the linemen who would not normally be ball carriers, subject to the approval by the referees.

Teams shall not use flags, belts or holders from any other source other than those provided by the league. Flags may not be altered in any way- taped, tied together, etc.. The

player must leave the playing field for one play and remove the illegal flag(s), belt or holders. Penalty - Unsportsmanlike conduct 10 yards.

Simultaneous flag pulling with hand off or pass - when a ball carrier's flag is pulled simultaneously with his releasing the ball during a pass or hand off, the action is considered to have been concluded prior to the flag pull and the ball remains live provided his hand was clearly in the motion of releasing the ball at the time of the pull.

When a ball carrier is flagged, the ball is spotted at the point where the flag was pulled. A runner's flag must break the plane of the goal line for a touchdown to be signaled or cross the respective yard line for a 1st down to be signaled.

When a ball carrier goes to the ground, the ball is dead at the point his knee touches the ground, even though he may fall farther forward. If the ball carrier goes down without his knee first touching, the ball is dead at the point the player's flags are, not where the ball touches the ground.

B. Flag Guarding

A ball carrier may not stiff arm or use his hands or arms in any manner to impede a defender's attempt to reach his flag. Any such movement by the runner is termed FLAG GUARDING.

Flag guarding is only called when a defender is in position to make an attempt for a runner's flag - in practical terms, about two (2) or three (3) yards. Penalty for Flag Guarding - 5 yards from the spot of infraction plus loss of down.

On a kickoff the penalty for Flag Guarding is 10 yards from point of infraction, no loss of down.

2.6 Blocking

In order for the offense to move the ball, there will be contact with the defense in the form of "blocking". This is a necessary, but controlled, physical aspect of CYFFA flag football. There are very specific provisions for blocking to insure the safety of participants and manage the collisions. Coaches and referees are expected to teach and enforce these guidelines.

First and foremost - blocking below the waist and on the neck or above (e.g. to the face) is prohibited. Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of the foul.

It is also illegal to leave your feet (ie, dive into an opponent) to make a block. Penalty - 10 yards.

In order to simplify the rules and avoid confusion, there is no free blocking zone on the line of scrimmage where the offense is allowed to block from the rear.

In all cases, it is illegal to block an opponent in the back. Penalty - 10 yards. Judgment may be applied regarding a player who "pulls up" to avoid the foul or a defensive player who is turning his back to try to draw the foul.

An offensive player may not use his hands or arms in any way to pull, tackle or hold an opponent; he may not swing his arms at or make chopping motion with his arms toward an opponent; he may not lock his hands together; he may not clench his fists with the intention of striking an opponent.

An offensive player may extend his arms to block providing he is within the blocking zone described as: regular formation end-end, extending 2 yards behind the line of scrimmage. This is normally a pass protection posture on the line - extended arm blocking by a pulling guard or wide receiver on a sweep is not permitted. Overly aggressive, extended arm blocking that is basically a tackle football style "shove" is not encouraged and may result in a penalty if deemed to be unsafe.

On a downfield pass play, the three interior linemen may not advance further than one yard beyond the line of scrimmage prior to the passing of the ball.

2.7 Passing and Pass Interference

The ball may be passed forward only from behind the line of scrimmage.

Eligible pass receivers are the three (3) backfield players plus the two (2) linemen on the end of the line at the time of the snap - i.e. the Center is eligible if he is at the end of the line.

Officials must be notified by the coach or captain prior to the employment of an exotic formation when it may not be immediately clear who the eligible pass receivers are. Such notification need not be made when it involves only a shift, leaving a Guard or Center at the end of the line eligible; but must be made when it involves a shift or motion spreading receivers over the field and leading to possible confusion or eligibility. Violation: Illegal Procedure.

A ball simultaneously in the possession of an offensive player and a defender at the time it is whistled dead shall be awarded to the offense.

A reception made by an eligible receiver is legal even if the ball beforehand was tipped or hit by another eligible receiver.

Missing Flag: An eligible pass receiver shall not be ruled ineligible because he is missing flags, but may not advance the ball should he catch it.

Once a ball is touched by a defender all eight men on the offensive team are eligible receivers.

Both offensive and defensive players have an equal right to a pass and incidental contact when both players are playing the ball does not constitute pass interference.

Pass interference occurs when one player uses his hands, arms, legs or body in such a way as to impede another player's way to or attempt to catch a pass. Tripping, tackling or waving one's hands before an opponent's face always constitutes pass interference.

Once a pass has been tipped into the air, there can be no pass interference so long as both players are playing the ball. There can be no interference on a ball that does not pass the line of scrimmage.

The penalty for pass interference by the defense is automatic first down at the point of interference. If interference is called in the end-zone, the ball is marked at the defense's 1-yard line and 1st down. If the spot of the snap was within the defense's ten (10) yard line and interference is called, the ball shall be spotted on the defense's one (1) yard line with an automatic first down.

The penalty for offensive pass interference is loss of down

plus five (5) from the line of scrimmage.

An illegal forward pass is one thrown from beyond the line of scrimmage or for the purpose of intentionally grounding the ball. Intentional grounding shall be called when a passer is about to be flagged and throws the ball toward the ground or such position on and off the field where clearly neither an offensive or defensive man is in position to receive it. Penalty: 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down.

The quarterback is allowed to spike the ball in order to stop the clock.

The three interior linemen may not advance further than one yard beyond the line of scrimmage prior to the passing of the ball.

An eligible receiver may not be bumped or interfered with once he is more than three (3) yards beyond the line of scrimmage.

2.8 Dead ball and spotting the ball

When a ball carrier is flagged, the ball is spotted at the point where the flag was pulled. A runner's flag must break the plane of the goal line for a touchdown to be signaled or cross the respective yard line for a 1st down to be signaled.

When a ball carrier goes to the ground, the ball is dead at the point his knee touches the ground, even though he may fall farther forward. If the ball carrier goes down without his knee first touching, the ball is dead at the point the player's flags are, not where the ball touches the ground.

In order to whistle the ball dead, an official must clearly and definitely observe the ball carrier flagged by a defender. Unless the official clearly and definitely saw the flagging before the hand off, he should not blow the whistle.

2.9 Fumbles

A very important difference from tackle football - the play is dead if a ball carrier drops the ball - ie, no mad scramble by players to recover a fumble on the ground.

There are some situations where the defense can end up with the ball and those situations are described below:

A fumble is defined as dropping the ball to the ground after any exchange of the ball (center to quarterback, or back to back) by the offensive team, or dropping the ball to the ground by a ball carrier after he has clearly obtained possession of it. A fumbled ball is dead at the spot it hits the ground and cannot be recovered by the opposing team. If the ball hits the ground in front of the ball carrier, it is dead at the point where it was last in clear possession of the ball carrier. A ball cannot be fumbled forward to the advantage of the offense.

If the team in possession passes, laterals or loses control of the ball without contact by a defender, and an opponent intercepts the ball before it hits the ground, it constitutes a change of possession and the ball can be advanced - ie, it's basically an interception at that point.

Defenders cannot strip a ball away from a ball carrier. If a defender has penetrated an offensive line and takes the ball away during an offensive exchange, this is not a penalty.

Example: a Quarterback, running back or receiver accidentally gives a hand off to a defender, or an offensive player and defensive player are going for the same hand off.

2.10 Clarification on "Spot of the Foul" ball placement for penalties

Major penalties committed by the offense are marked from the spot of the foul. These penalties are the 10 yard penalties summarized in the Quick Guide on page 22 and flag guarding. All other offensive penalties are marked from the line of scrimmage.

Quick Guide
Summary Table of Penalties, Section 2
playing on offense

Infraction	Page	Yardage	Additional Comments
Five players not on the line	14	5	Illegal formation – repeat the down
More than one back in motion at the time of the snap	15	5	Illegal procedure – repeat the down
Back in motion turns upfield prior to the snap	15	5	Illegal procedure – repeat the down
Offense lines up or jumps into neutral zone prior to the snap	15	5	Offsides – repeat the down
Offense players entering game from sideline without being part of the huddle	15	5	Illegal substitution – repeat the down
More than eight players breaking from the huddle	15	5	Illegal substitution – repeat the down
Ball carrier must avoid contact, and should not leave their feet	16	10	Diving or hurdling over an opponent is a double 10 yard penalty, plus loss of down
Running over an opponent	16	10	Judgement call, but if blatant, 10 yard penalty and loss of down.
Taped, tied, or altered flags to hinder defense ability to pull	16, 17	10	Unsportsmanlike conduct – 10 yards from line of scrimmage
Ball carrier flag guarding	17	5	Marked from spot of infraction, plus loss of down
Blocking below the waist or on the neck and above	18	10	Illegal blocking – 10 yards from spot of the foul – repeat the down
Blocking in the back	18	10	Clipping – 10 yards from spot of the foul Repeat the down
Pulling, tackling, holding while on offense	18	10	Illegal use of hands – 10 yards from spot of the foul Repeat the down
Overly aggressive, extended arm blocking deemed to be unsafe	19	10	Warning to the player (and coach) on the first occasion – illegal use of hands penalty after that.
Linemen more than one yard beyond the line of scrimmage on a forward pass	19	5	Illegal procedure – repeat the down
QB beyond the line of scrimmage before throwing	20	5	Illegal forward pass – repeat the down
QB unloads a pass to avoid a sack	20	5	Intentional grounding – loss of down
Offensive pass interference	19	5	Marked from line of scrimmage plus loss of down

3.0 Rules / Penalties on Defense

Successfully playing defense in flag football is a matter of stopping the offense from advancing the ball. Instead of tackling a ball carrier, however, the defender must pull the flag to stop a runner's progress. The offense can run or pass, so the defense must be aligned to react to both possibilities. There is physical play in flag football, to be sure, so there are several specific rules in place to insure safety and minimize the high speed collisions that are more common in tackle football. Coaches and referees will be vigilant in this regard.

3.1 Flagging

A player flagging the ball carrier shall immediately stop and place the flag down on the spot of the flagging. Failure to do so may result in the assessment of an illegal procedure penalty.

After pulling a flag, a player may not place the flag on the ground with a display of excess emotion or temper (such as grinding his shoe on the flag). Violation - Unsportsmanlike conduct 10 yards.

Simultaneous flag pulling with hand off or pass - when a ball carrier's flag is pulled simultaneously with his releasing the ball during a pass or hand off, the action is considered to have been concluded prior to the flag pull and the ball remains live provided his hand was clearly in the motion of releasing the ball at the time of the pull.

Tripping, Tackling, Blocking or Interference with a runner: A defender who brings down a runner prior to flagging him will be assessed a ten (10) yard penalty from the point of infraction. The penalty will not be assessed if the ball carrier is partially responsible for the contact.

If a defender makes a lunge for a ball carrier's flags and trips him or knocks him out of bounds without flagging him, this is considered tackling - Ten (10) yard penalty.

If however, a defender flags the ball carrier simultaneously with the contact, the play is legal.

Any time a ball carrier goes out of bounds with both flags intact as the result of contact initiated by a defender, it is illegal. Penalty - 10 yards.

Deliberate flagging of a potential ball carrier when it is clear he does not have the ball constitutes unsportsmanlike conduct. Example: An eligible ball carrier is flagged by a defender where it is clear he/she does not have the ball; or the defender repeatedly flags all backs coming through the line when it is clear they are not carrying the ball.

3.2 Illegal use of hands

It is legal for a defensive player to use his hands to push an offensive player out of the way in an attempt to reach the ball carrier or passer, but he shall not make contact with the opponent above the shoulder or below the waist. Penalty: Unnecessary Roughness, 10 yards AND repeat the down.

A defensive player may not hold an opponent that is attempting to go downfield as an eligible receiver. Penalty - Holding 5 yards and 1st down.

An eligible receiver may not be bumped or interfered with once he is more than three (3) yards beyond the line of scrimmage.

3.3 Unnecessary Roughness and roughing the passer

A. Unnecessary Roughness

No player shall drive his head into an opponent or head butt in any manner on any play. Penalty: 15 yards (plus unsportsmanlike conduct, if flagrant).

While it is legal to push a defender out of the way as described in 3.2 above, it is not legal to aggressively grab another player and throw them to the ground. Penalty: Unnecessary Roughness, 10 yards AND repeat the down.

B. Roughing the Passer

A defender may not run into the passer before or after he has released the ball. Penalty - 10 yards.

A defender may hit the arm of a passer in the process of releasing the ball if he is trying to block the ball.

A ball in the hands of a passer preparing to pass is live and may be intercepted and advanced by a defender before or after it leaves the passer's hand so long as it does not touch the ground beforehand.

3.4 Encroachment and Offsides

A defensive player may enter the neutral zone and will not be penalized providing they have returned to their side of the line of scrimmage before the center snaps the ball. If the defensive player is in the neutral zone when the ball is snapped, the ref shall throw a flag but NOT blow the whistle. This is a live ball foul. Penalty: the offense shall have the choice, after completion of the play, to either accept the penalty (5 yards and repeat the down) or decline the penalty and have the result of the play (it's a free play).

If a defensive player jumps into the neutral zone and causes an offensive player to jump, the penalty is against the defense. Side judges have to be watching carefully.

If the defensive player crosses into the offensive set and/or makes contact with an offensive player, the ref will throw a flag and blow the whistle. Penalty: 5 yards and repeat down.

3.5 Pass Interference

Both offensive and defensive players have an equal right to a pass and incidental contact when both players are playing the ball does not constitute pass interference

Pass interference occurs when one player uses his hands, arms, legs or body in such a way as to impede another player's way to or attempt to catch a pass. Tripping, tackling or waving one's hands before an opponent's face always constitutes pass interference.

Once a pass has been tipped into the air, there can be no pass interference so long as both players are playing the ball.

There can be no interference on a ball that does not pass

the line of scrimmage.

A ball simultaneously in the possession of an offensive player and a defender at the time it is whistled dead shall be awarded to the offense.

The penalty for pass interference by the defense is automatic first down at the point of interference. If interference is called in the end-zone, the ball is marked at the defense's 1-yard line and 1st down. If the spot of the snap was within the defense's ten (10) yard line and interference is called, the ball shall be spotted on the defense's one (1) yard line with an automatic first down. An eligible receiver may not be bumped or interfered with once he is more than three (3) yards beyond the line of scrimmage.

Flagging a Receiver Prior to Reception: pass interference and a penalty of ten (10) yards and a 1st down. If the pass is not caught, 10 yard penalty and 1st down from the point of interference or line of scrimmage, whichever is greater. If the pass is caught, 10 yard penalty and 1st down from the point of interference or line of scrimmage, which ever is greater.

3.6 Interceptions and Fumbles

A ball in the hands of a passer preparing to pass is live and may be intercepted and advanced by a defender before or after it leaves the passer's hand so long as it does not touch the ground beforehand.

A fumble is defined as dropping the ball to the ground after any exchange of the ball (center to quarterback, or back to back) by the offensive team, or dropping the ball to the ground by a ball carrier after he has clearly obtained possession of it. A fumbled ball is dead at the spot it hits the ground and cannot be recovered by the opposing team. If the ball hits the ground in front of the ball carrier, it is dead at the point where it was last in clear possession of the ball carrier. A ball cannot be fumbled forward to the advantage of the offense.

If the team in possession passes, laterals or loses control of the ball without contact by a defender, and an opponent intercepts the ball before it hits the ground, it constitutes a change of possession and the ball can be advanced - ie, it's basically an interception at that point.

Defenders cannot strip a ball away from a ball carrier. If a defender has penetrated an offensive line and takes the ball away during an offensive exchange, this is not a penalty. Example: a Quarterback, running back or receiver accidentally gives a hand off to a defensive or offensive player and defensive player are going for the same hand off.

3.7 Intentional confusion of the offense

No member of the defensive team or their sideline contingent shall interfere verbally with the offense's calling of its signals. This does not bar the use of defensive signals, provided they are not simply for the purpose of disruption.

Any attempt to confuse or mislead the offense or the referees by trick flagging (pulling flags from non-ball carriers to disrupt play and get a whistle) is unsportsmanlike conduct.

3.8 Player Substitutions

Players entering the game on defense must stay in for at least one play.

An extra player on the field at the time of the snap of the ball, a player who enters or exits the game from any other point except his team sideline, or a player who fails to remain in the game for at least one play constitutes Illegal Substitution - Penalty 5 yards.

Injury substitutions cannot occur when a play is "live", but can occur without the restrictions described above once play is stopped.

Quick Guide
Summary Table of Penalties, Section 3
playing on defense

Infraction	Page	Yardage	Additional Comments
Tripping, tackling, intentional interference with no intent to pull flags – including shoving the runner out of bounds	23	10	Assessed from the point of the foul
Aggressive display of emotion after pulling a flag	23	10	Judgement call, but referee needs to insure emotions are not escalating
Defense hands to the head or below the waist	24	10	Unnecessary roughness – repeat the down
Running into the passer	24, 25	10	Roughing the passer
Defense jumps through the neutral zone <u>and into</u> the offensive formation	25	5	Offsides – stop the play, repeat the down
Defense is in the neutral zone when ball is snapped	25	5	Encroachment – flag thrown, but “free” play for the offense – if penalty assessed, 5 yards and repeat the down
Defense jumps into the neutral zone and causes the offense to move before ball is snapped	25		Offsides – stop the play, repeat the down
Physically impeding a receiver from catching the ball – includes hands in the face with no intent to play the ball	25, 26	-	Automatic first down – if in the end zone, ball marked at 1 yard line
Deliberate verbal interference with play calling	27	5	Illegal procedure – repeat the down
Too many players on the field, entering the game after the play has started	27	5	Illegal substitution – repeat the down

4.0 Rules / Penalties on Special Teams

Special Teams play in flag football involves a few more rules and is more "controlled" than the kicking game in tackle football. There is no rushing of the punter (although a defender on the line can attempt to deflect a ball without crossing the line of scrimmage), and there are no "onside" fumble recovery plays on the kick off. Other rules already outlined for offense and defense apply to special teams play along with others, described below, that are specific to formations, spacing of players, and ball handling.

4.1 Kick Team (kick off)

Kickoffs are at the 35 yard line with the restraining line also the 35 yard line - unless there has been a penalty assessed from a prior play.

In all cases, regardless of where the kick off is spotted, there will 10 yards between the kicking team and the front line of the receiving team.

No member of the kickoff team may cross the plane of the ball until kicked.

A team kicking the ball out-of-bounds on a kick-off will be penalized 5 yards and must re-kick. The opposing coach may NOT elect to take the ball where it went out-of-bounds.

The ball cannot be recovered by the kick off team; i.e. this is not a live ball. If the ball is not fielded by the receiving team and it is still in bounds, a member of the kicking team touching the ball in any manner ends the play. The ball is dead and spotted on the yard line where touched.

A kick off that goes into the receive team's end zone can be advanced or "downed" as a dead ball. A kick that is "downed" or goes through the back of the end zone will be spotted on their 15 yard line.

4.1 Receiving Team (kick off)

The receiving team on kick offs must have at least four players on the restraining line - ie, ten yards from the kicking team. Having a minimum of four players on the restraining line is the only restriction on player alignment for the receiving team on kick offs.

A receiver may pick up the ball and run with it on a kick off if the player drops it in the attempt to field the kick in flight or if the player muffs picking up a ball that is already rolling on the ground. Fielding a rolling ball on a kick is the only time that advancing a ball that has hit the ground is allowed. If the ball on the ground has come to a complete stop, however, it cannot be advanced by the receive team. As stated previously, the kicking team cannot recover the ball - the only possibility for advancing the ball is with the receive team.

If a receiver obtains possession of the ball and then drops it, it is a fumble and the ball is dead at the spot it hits the ground. The kick receiver must have controlled the ball in his hands for approximately one second in order for "possession" to be established.

4.3 Kick Team (punting)

All punts are "announced" - meaning, the offense must inform the referees and the defense of the intention to kick the ball. This rule exists because the defense is not allowed to rush the punter. The exchange from center to kicker and the punt itself are done in a controlled manner.

On an announced punt, the defense has Ten (10) seconds to adjust. As such, there is no "quick kick" play to catch an opponent off guard. On any fourth down, the referee shall ask the offensive captain if he is going to kick.

Kicker must be at least three (3) yards behind the line of scrimmage when kicking the ball (5 yard penalty).

Play does not start until the kick is made. Once the kicker has contacted the ball, the players may head downfield to pull flags of the receiving team ball carrier or down the ball by touching it before it is advanced.

If the Punter drops the ball in the process of the Punt, the Ball is dead where it drops.

A punt that goes out of bounds is spotted on the yard line where the ball crossed the sideline. A punt that goes into the receive team's end zone can be advanced or "downed" as a dead ball. A punt that is "downed" or goes through the back of the end zone will be spotted on their 15 yard line.

4.4 Receiving Team (punting)

The receiving team on punts must have at least four players on the line of scrimmage. This requirement for a four man front is the only restriction on player alignment for the receiving team on punts.

Receiving team players cannot cross the line of scrimmage in an effort to block the kick. As stated earlier, play does not start until the kick is made. Contact with a ball in early flight is allowed if it can be made from the receive team side of the line of scrimmage (a low kick, as an example, could be deflected by a tall defender without crossing the line of scrimmage or endangering the kicker).

A receiver may pick up the ball and run with it on a punt if the player drops it in the attempt to field the kick in flight or if the player muffs picking up a ball that is already rolling on the ground. Fielding a rolling ball on a kick is the only time that advancing a ball that has hit the ground is allowed. If the ball on the ground has come to a complete stop, however, it cannot be advanced by the receive team. As stated previously, the kicking team cannot recover the ball - the only possibility for advancing the ball is with the receiving team.

If a receiver obtains possession of the ball and then drops it, it is a fumble and the ball is dead at the spot. Possession is established in this case as soon as the receiver has controlled the ball in his hands for approximately one second.

A punt that goes out of bounds is spotted on the yard line where the ball crossed the sideline. A punt that goes into or through the receive team's end zone without being advanced is spotted on their 15 yard line.

4.5 Putting the Ball in play following a safety

The flagging of a ball carrier attempting to run the ball out of the end zone, a fumble behind the goal line or a fumbled ball that goes out of bounds behind the goal line while in possession of the offensive team or a kick that goes out of bounds behind the goal line of the kicking team constitutes a safety.

Any penalty occurring behind the goal line of the offensive team or an illegal forward pass from behind the goal line by the offensive team constitutes a safety.

Following a safety, the ball will be put in play by a punt or free kick from the 15 yard line.

Quick Guide

Summary Table of Penalties, Section 4

playing on kick offs and punts

Infraction	Page	Yardage	Additional Comments
Kick team headed downfield before ball is kicked	29, 30	5 yards	Offsides, repeat the play
Receive team with not enough players (4) on restraining line	29	5 yards	Illegal formation, repeat the play or evaluate for possible first down
Kick off goes out of bounds prior to reaching the end zone	29	5 yards	Re-kick
Kick off or punt goes into the end zone	29, 30	-	Ball can be advanced if fielded cleanly in the end zone – if the ball goes through the back of the end zone or is “downed” without a play, ball is spotted at the receive team 15 yard line
Kick off or punt goes into the end zone	29, 30		Further clarification If you field the kick in the end zone, you can “down” the ball by taking a knee or you can attempt to run out of the end zone for yardage. A kick that lands in the end zone without being played will be whistled “down”
All other penalties associated with the play of the offense will apply to the team receiving the ball on a kick	22	-	Section 2.0 and Quick Guide on Page 22 avoidance of contact, illegal use of hands, blocking below the waist or above the shoulders, clipping, etc
Flag guarding on kick returns	17	10	Marked from the point of infraction, no loss of down applicable
All other penalties associated with the play of the defense will apply to the kicking team	28	-	Section 3.0 and Quick Guide on Page 28 tripping, tackling, shoving out of bounds, illegal use of hands, etc

5.0 Special Situations and Unsportsmanlike Conduct

5.1 Playing shorthanded (less than 8 players)

Teams must have at least 6 players to start a game. There must be equal players on both sides. In a shorthanded situation, it is the backfield on offense that is initially impacted. For a game of "seven on seven", the offense will deploy with a center and three players on the line, and a QB and two players in the backfield. One player on the end of the line is an eligible receiver (along with the backfield players). For "six on six", there will be a center, two guards, and three in the backfield. In both cases, the center and two guards are mandatory for the offense.

If a shorthanded situation is created because a player was removed from a game for unsportsmanlike conduct, there will be no impact on the opposing team. They will continue to play with a full squad.

If a team goes down to five players, the game is forfeited. Once the referees are on the field, there is a fifteen minute grace period for a coach to field a team. After fifteen minutes a team must field the minimum players or forfeit the game.

5.2 High scoring, one-sided game

If one team leads by twenty one (21) or more points anytime during the game, coaches shall use their best efforts to:

Remove the more experienced players from the field or reassign the best players to non-scoring offensive positions (guards or center). Players may continue to play defense.

Failure to do so may result in the stoppage of play as determined by the Head Referee and or any Board Member which may result in a disciplinary action against the coach by the Board.

If the point difference reduces to less than 21 points, then normal rules shall apply and all players become eligible at all positions.

Opposing coaches do not have a say in which players are removed from the game or rotated to non-scoring positions.

5.3 Tie games - overtime

If the game is tied at the end of regulation time, there will be a "shoot-out" period as described below.

After a five (5) minute break, the captains from each team will meet at the center of the field, as in the beginning of the game, for a coin toss. The Home team shall decide "heads" or "tails". The winner will select which end of the field the shoot-out will be played at or if they prefer offense or defense. The 2nd team shall make a decision on the remaining selection.

Each team will be allowed one (1) time out and one (1) referee conference for each shoot-out. Time outs left over from regulation play do not carry over into overtime.

The ball will be placed at the 20-yard line.

All rules governing play will be followed in the shoot-out, however, an interception or turnover is simply a change of possession - no scoring off of a turnover in this format.

Team 1 will turn the ball over to Team 2 either after a score (and extra point attempt) or loss of downs.

Team 2 will take possession at the same 20-yard line.

During regular season, if the game is still a tie after the first shoot-out, the game will be recorded as a tie. During Bowl games, teams will play a 2nd shoot-out. If after the 2nd shoot-out the game is still tied, a coin toss can be used to determine the winner. Both coaches are encouraged to forego the coin toss and instead congratulate both teams for a great finish to the season.

5.4 Disrupted play due to sideline interference

Coaches, players, and spectators are permitted along the sidelines as long as they retain decorum and do not yell at players to disrupt play. There is a "restricted zone" on the sidelines from the goal line to the 10 yard line where

only the officiating crew or Board members are allowed to stand during play.

The coach is responsible for the action of himself, players and families/friends of players on his sidelines. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties may be assessed by the referee on any member of a team's contingent along the sidelines.

Any coach, player, spectator who enters the field of play and is not part of the offense or defense in the play in progress and disrupts the play on a clear break away toward a touchdown - a touchdown will be automatically awarded and the individual who created the disruption will be ejected and removed from the field area.

5.5 Inadvertent Whistle

This is a referee's error and it can happen by accident. Since there is no absolute equitable way to redress the error, a delayed whistle is to be much preferred to a quick whistle, since there is no danger of injury.

A quick whistle occurs usually as a result of:

- a) an official carrying the whistle in his mouth and blowing it inadvertently while running,
- b) an official thinks he hears, rather than sees a flag pulled
- c) an official gets over anxious or makes a judgment call too quickly

Inadvertent whistles can be eliminated completely by total concentration on the part of the officials and a moment's reflection before blowing the whistle. *No official shall place the whistle in his mouth until he is ready to blow it.*

If a whistle is sounded prior to the pulling of a ball carrier's flag, the ball is dead at the point it had reached when the whistle sounded, if it is at or in advance of the line of scrimmage. If there is an erroneous whistle when the ball is behind the line or scrimmage, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.

5.6 Dead Ball Foul

Any penalty incurred after the ball has been dead or before it has been declared ready for play is a dead ball foul and cannot affect prior or subsequent plays. A dead ball foul

will be administered separately from a live ball foul and cannot be an offsetting foul.

Example: It is second down and eight for the offensive team, which is called for offsides. Following the whistle ending the play, the defense commits an unnecessary roughness foul. After the defense accepts the five (5) yard penalty for offsides the unnecessary roughness penalty is administered, making it second down and three.

Any penalty incurred by either team after the player's flag crosses the plane of the goal line during the scoring of a touchdown, extra point or safety is a dead ball foul and shall be administered on the following kickoff or free kick.

5.7 Penalties on scoring plays or last play of a quarter

A major penalty (10+ yard) committed by the defensive team on a play in which the offense scores a touchdown or extra point, shall be assessed on the ensuing kickoff. Minor penalties will no doubt be "declined" by the offense and there is no assessment on the kick off.

A penalty committed by the offense on a scoring play after the ball has crossed the plane of the goal line, shall be assessed on the ensuing kickoff.

5.8 Safeties and Touchbacks

The flagging of a ball carrier attempting to run the ball out of the end zone, a fumble behind the goal line or a fumbled ball that goes out of bounds behind the goal line while in possession of the offensive team or a kick that goes out of bounds behind the goal line of the kicking team constitutes a safety. Following a safety, the ball will be put in play by a punt or free kick from the 15 yard line.

A touchback occurs any time a ball becomes dead behind the goal line of the defensive team and has been given its momentum by the offensive team. Providing the defense does not attempt to run the ball out of the end zone, this occurs when a kicked ball goes out of bounds or becomes dead behind the goal line; when a runner fumbles a ball prior to crossing the goal line and it rolls into the end zone. Following a touchback, the previously defensive team shall put the ball in play with first down at its 15 yard line.

If a player decides to run the ball out of the end zone, then touches it down behind the goal line prior to being

flagged and not having previously crossed over the goal line, it is a touchback.

If a player fumbles while attempting to run the ball out of the end zone, it is a safety.

Any penalty occurred behind the goal line of the offensive team or an illegal forward pass from behind the goal line by the offensive team constitutes a safety.

5.9 Unsportsmanlike Conduct (player, coach, spectator)

CYFFA has a zero tolerance attitude as it relates to unsportsmanlike conduct. Violations which compromise the safety of participants or which result in a threatening environment for participants or spectators are not allowed. This is recreational, youth flag football and that perspective needs to be firmly in the minds of all.

No player shall kick, knee or spear an opponent; fight or challenge to fight; use insulting language to a member of an opposing team, parent, coach or official.

No coach, player, parent or fan of a team shall use insulting or baiting language to an official, any player, coach or adherent of either team, shall fight or challenge to fight, or engage in words or action detrimental to the sportsmanlike conduct of the game.

The coach is responsible for the action of himself, players and families/friends of players on his sidelines. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties may be assessed by the referee on any member of a team's contingent along the sidelines.

No member of the defensive team or their sidelines shall interfere verbally with the offense's calling of its signals. This does not bar the use of defensive signals, provided they are not simply for the purpose of disruption.

Players or coaches shall make a reasonable effort not to run up the score or to rub in a defeat on an opponent when a game is clearly won.

An unsportsmanlike conduct penalty may be assessed at the time in addition to another penalty and unsportsmanlike conduct penalties may be consecutive.

As an interim step and in an effort to defuse escalating emotions, the referee may issue an unsportsmanlike warning (similar to a yellow card in other sports) which will result in a five yard penalty. There will be only one warning. The full measure unsportsmanlike conduct penalty which will follow is 10 yards.

Individual Unsportsmanlike Penalty - Any player, coach or parent subject to two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties during the game shall be suspended from the game and removed from the field.

Sideline Unsportsmanlike Penalty - referee may assess a sideline penalty if he is unable to identify the individual in question. The penalty will count as a team penalty towards the head coach, not an individual penalty.

Team/Coach Unsportsmanlike Penalty - the head coach, or the assistant coach, if the head coach is not present, will be suspended if (1) he receives two individual unsportsmanlike penalties; (2) there are a total of four unsportsmanlike penalties assessed against individuals or the sideline of the respective team. (Example: one against a player, one for a parent, one for a sideline and the 4th against the assistant coach. Head coach is suspended)

Suspensions will be for the remainder of the game in progress PLUS one additional game. If the suspension occurs after the game has ended, the person will be suspended for the next complete game. Offenders are not allowed anywhere within the fences of the playing fields.

The Head referee will notify the "head" coach on the field of the suspension.

The head coach must notify the Division VP of the suspension within 48 hours of the end of the game.

Suspensions will be enforced throughout the post-season.

The CYFFA Board reserves the right to remove any person from all CYFFA activities for the remainder of the season for a flagrant act. Examples of such acts include, but are not limited to: hitting another player, coach, referee, parent or fan, excessive profanity. The Board will review the act at the next regularly scheduled meeting. Until then, the person or persons involved may not attend any CYFFA activity.