



# **SOUTH METRO RECREATION LEAGUES** **YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL RULES**

**Rules and Guidelines (Revised March 5, 2025)**

**All Rules Changes will be Highlighted in Yellow**

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**The following rules will govern the play in all South Metro Recreational League Games.**

**All rules and game situations not covered in this set of rules will defer to the official.**

## **League Contact Information**

City	Contact	E-Mail	Inclement Weather Line	League Websites
Raymore	Nick Cook	ncook@raymore.com	(816) 892-3131	www.teamsideline.com/raymore
Grandview	George Hermanson	ghermanson@grandview.org	(816) 316-4990	www.teamsideline.com/grandview
Harrisonville	Alex Slocum	aslocum@harrisonville.com	(816) 380-8980 EXT. 9	www.teamsideline.com/harrisonville
Pleasant Hill	Dharma	dgilsdorf@pleasanthill.com	(816) 295-9855	www.teamsideline.com/pleasanthill
Peculiar	Seth Wansing	swansing@cityofpeculiar.com	(816) 779-2299	www.teamsideline.com/peculiar
Belton	Jared Benson	jaredb@beltonparks.org	(816) 348-3744	www.teamsideline.com/belton

# **Section I**

## **General Rules**

### **Inclement Weather Information**

- In the event of inclement weather, each individual community will decide if games will be played. Please use the inclement weather information hotlines listed on page 1 of these rules.

### **Protests**

- All decisions made by the referees and league officials are final, (no protests are allowed).

### **Game Length / Timing Procedures**

- Games shall consist of **(2)**, running **(20)**-minute halves. The clock will only stop for half time, timeouts, injuries, and official's discretion.
- Halftime is **(2-5)** minutes long
- Each time the ball is spotted, the team with the ball has **(30)** seconds to snap the ball

### **Timeouts**

- Each team will be allowed **(3)** timeouts for the game

### **Tie Games**

- In the event a game ends regulation in a tie, **OVERTIME** will determine who will win the game.
  - The home team will call the toss to determine the team that chooses offense or defense first.
  - If a second round of overtime is needed, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of defense.
  - Each team will take turns getting **(1)** play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or from the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether or not the offense scores, the defensive team will get a chance for a one point or 2 point conversion.
- If both teams are unsuccessful or make the total, the **second** overtime period begins.
  - Both teams must "go for two" and will need to attempt a score from the defense's 10-yard line.
- If both teams score or are unsuccessful in converting in the second round of overtime, a **third & final** overtime period begins.
  - Both teams will attempt a "go for one" from the defense's 5-yard line.
  - The team that scores or gains the most amount of yards will win the game
- **ALL** points gathered during overtime periods will be recorded and inputted on teamsideline.

**Interceptions are returnable in OT and are worth 2 points if the player scores**

### **Scoring**

- Touchdowns = 6 Points
  - To score a touchdown, the player's HIPS must cross the endzone
- PAT (Point After Touchdown) = 1 Point (5-yard line) or 2 Point (10-yard line)
- Safety = 2 Points
- Safety will occur when...
  - The ball-carrier is declared down in his/her endzone
  - If the ball-carrier's flag is pulled, or falls off in his/her's endzone
  - Steps out of bounds in his/her endzone
  - When his/her knee or arm touches the ground in the endzone
  - If a fumble or snap results in the ball landing in the endzone

### **Grace Rule**

- If a team is losing by 35 points or more (35-0) then the **Grace Rule** will take place.

- The score once 35-0 occurs in a game will no longer be kept
  - A team that is losing cannot have a “comeback” to win the game at that point
- The score of the game that invokes the **Grace Rule** is what will be inputted on to teamsideline

### **Substitutions / Playing Time**

- Substitutions may be made during any dead ball.
- **Each** player is required to play a minimum of **(20)** minutes, which is equivalent of half of each game
- Teams may borrow players in order to make sure they have five players present or to avoid forfeit. If a team will already have 5 players present that team is not permitted to add any additional players. League officials and opposing coaches must approve any additions ahead of time. Teams may only borrow players from the same grade division or the immediate younger division.
  - Any borrowed player must be registered within the city organization of the team that is asking for a substitute

### **Team Roster On & Off the field**

- Each team must play with 5 players on the field at all times
  - Adjustments per officials and coaches can be made if injuries are to cause insufficient amount of players on the field (4 on 4)
  - Teams may not play with any less than 4 players on the field
- The five players on the field will consist of...
  - Center **(1)**
  - Quarterback **(1)**
  - Wide Receivers/Tight Ends
  - Running Back
- **Suggested** maximum numbers of players on a roster should not exceed **(10)**

### **Equipment**

- Mouth Guards are suggested but not required
- Flags/flag belts, footballs, and uniform shirts will be provided by the parks and recreation department
  - Kindergarten - 4th Grade: Smaller NFL Blue Footballs
  - 5th Grade - 8th Grade: Bigger Regular NFL Footballs

### **Game Format**

1. At the start of the game, coaches and captains will meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball.
  - a. The **visiting** team calls 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.
  - a. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield.
  - a. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) downs to score a touchdown
    - i. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elect to “punt” on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team elects to go for it on 4th down and does not cross midfield, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.
    - ii. Offensive teams **MUST** declare 4th down intent; “Go for it or Punt”, when asked by the referee
    - iii. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts on its own 5-yard line.
4. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on

defense

5. The ball must be snapped between the legs of the center, according to any cadents provided by the quarterback ("Down, Set, Hut" ,"Clap Count", "Ready Go")
6. The defensive players must line up by the following distances before the ball is snapped.
  - a. Kindergarten: Players must line up 5 yards off the line of scrimmage
  - b. 1/2 Grade & Up: Players must line up 1 yard off the line of scrimmage

## **Section II**

### **Sportsmanship Policy / Coaches and Player Conduct**

**The South Metro Sports Leagues Sportsmanship Policy:** As a league, we encourage positive reinforcement from coaches, officials, parents and teammates for every player. Harassing, shouting or engaging in any sort of emotional or physical harm to an opposing coach, league official/referee, or any player will not be permitted. Individuals who fail to comply with this policy will be asked to leave the game or, at the discretion of league officials, will be removed from the league. We thank you for your cooperation with this matter as we strive to provide a safe and fun environment for the children in our communities to learn the fundamentals of youth sports.

- A coach, player, parent or bench personnel shall not:
  - Deliberately throw water bottles, items, or team equipment.
  - Use words to incite or try to incite spectators into demonstrations, use profanity, racial comments, or remarks which reflect upon opposing players, officials or spectators.
  - Use amplifiers, speakers or bull horns on the bench or in the bleachers during the course of the game.
  - Maliciously run onto the field.
  - Be outside the vicinity of the team bench during the play of the game.
  - Verbalize in any way with the opposing team for the purpose of intimidation.
  - Exhibit behavior that is not in accordance with the spirit of fair play. Officials and league officials have the right to restrict a coach to his/her bench for the remainder of the game if they feel that the coach is not following the rules of the game or acting in accordance with the spirit of fair play. The coach will be able to continue to coach his/her team from the bench as long as the coach follows the rules during the rest of the game.
  - If a coach, player, or spectator is ejected from a game, the offender will be suspended for a minimum of one additional game. The one game suspension will be served at the next scheduled league game. League officials reserve the right to suspend individuals for more than one game if the league official deems it necessary, or the offender has been suspended before.
  - If any coach, player, or spectator threatens an official, umpire, opposing coach, spectator or player, that individual will be removed from the league.
  - If a game is called due to coaches, parent or player misconduct, that team will forfeit the game.

## **Section III**

### **Uniforms**

- Required uniforms will consist of all players on the team having the same colored shirt/jersey (exceptions: player forgot his/her uniform/jersey) provided by the city organization the team is registered in.
  - If a player forgets his/her uniform, pennies will be provided
- If two opposing teams have the same colored jersey/uniform, the away team will wear different colored pennies, which will be supplied by the facility that the game is being played at.
- **Players are not allowed to wear shorts that will match the same color of flags on the flag belt.**

## **Section IV**

### **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
  - a. 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 all their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot or other body part contacts the ground 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
  - a. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
5. Any official can call the play dead.
6. Play is ruled "dead" when...
  - a. The ball hits the ground
    - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit 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. Inadvertent Whistle
  - i. Ball-carrier leaves their feet other than jump cuts, spinning, or to avoid a downed player on the field

**NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball becomes dead if dropped by the ball-carrier. (If the ball is fumbled forward then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession)**

## **Section V**

### **Running the Ball**

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who received the snap.
3. Direct handoffs, pitches, and laterals are permitted behind the line of scrimmage ONLY. If this takes place after the ball carrier has already crossed the line of scrimmage, the play is blown dead by the official. The ball shall be placed at the spot of possession.
  - a. "Center Sneak" play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to hand off the ball to the center on the first handoff of the play.
  - b. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
  - c. Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind, or to the side of the quarterback, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
4. Definition of a "Legal Handoff" - Total loss of possession directly from one (1) offensive player to another
5. Pitches and Laterals are defined as underhand tosses that are received behind the player who pitched/lateralled the ball
  - a. Players who receive a backward pass, pitch, or lateral have the option to run or pass the football.
  - b. If the ball is dropped on a pitch or lateral; the ball is dead at the spot it is dropped and the offense takes possession at that spot.
  - c. The ball can not be advanced without possession. (No fumbling forward)
    - i. If the ball bounces off a player forward, past the line of scrimmage, then the line of scrimmage will be placed where it was first touched by the player.
6. No-run zones are located before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of the 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.
  - a. Each offensive team approaches only two (2) no-run zones in each drive
    - i. One 5 yards from the midfield to gain a first down
    - ii. One 5 yards from the goal line to score a touchdown
  - b. Kindergarten division does not have a "no-run zone"**
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag is considered flag guarding.
8. Spinning/Jump Cuts are allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
  - a. A player spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
9. Ball carriers may leave their feet and the play will continue for spinning, jump cuts, QB's passing progression or if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player.
10. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
11. Offensive players in close proximity to the ball carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.

12. 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.
13. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
14. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind, or to the side of the QB, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

## **Section VI**

### **Passing the Ball**

1. Only one (1) forward pass, thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, is permitted per offensive play. The ball must be released prior to crossing the line of scrimmage.
  - a. There is no intentional grounding
  - b. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage
  - c. Passes may be thrown backwards behind the line of scrimmage
    - i. Only one (1) backward pass is permitted per offensive play
2. Backward passes are defined as overhand passes that are **definitively** received behind where the ball was thrown from.
  - a. If the ball is dropped on a backward pass; the play is treated as a fumble and is dead at the spot the ball is dropped. The offense then takes possession at that spot.
  - b. The ball can not be advanced without possession. (No fumbling forward)
    - i. If the ball bounces off a player forward, past the line of scrimmage, then the line of scrimmage will be placed where it was first touched by the player.
  - c. Players who receive a backward pass, pitch, or lateral have the option to run or pass the football.
    - i. Players who receive a backward pass and choose to throw the ball must pass the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. Shovel passes are permitted and must be a forward pass, from behind the line of scrimmage, and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
4. The quarterback has a seven second "pass clock". If a pass is not thrown within the seven (7) seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, pitched, lateralled, or backward passed the 7-second rule is no longer 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.
  - b. If the QB throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated as an incomplete pass

## **Section VI**

## **Receiving the Ball**

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage)
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 toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession of the ball.
4. In case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six (6) points, two(2) points if returned during conversions and/or overtime.

## **Section VIII**

### **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 the 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 the player's flag inadvertently falls off during a play while that player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. If a player who has one or no flags in their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at the spot on the field.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. 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 football jersey.

## **Section IX**

### **Defense**

#### **Kindergarten and 1st/2nd Grade Divisions CANNOT Rush The Passer**

1. All players who rush the passer must be seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Players who are rushing the passer must RAISE THEIR HAND to identify themselves before rushing the passer.
  - o MAXIMUM of 2 rushers per play



3. Players who are rushing the passer must attempt to rush immediately after the ball is snapped. (No delayed rushing is permitted)
  - Infractions on rules (2) and (3) will result in an Illegal Procedure penalty (5 yard penalty).
4. Once the ball is handed off, pitched, lateralled, or received from a backward pass; the seven (7) yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go beyond the line of scrimmage.
5. A Referee will designate the rush line seven (7) yards away from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
  - A legal rush is...
    - Any rush from a point of 7-yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
    - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
    - A penalty may be called if...
      - The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass - Illegal Rush (5-yard penalty, first down)
      - Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped - Offsides (5-yard penalty, first down)
      - 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-yard penalty, first down)
      - If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven(7) yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) CANNOT rush during the play. However, any defender that is seven(7) yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.
6. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the QB unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.
7. The offense CANNOT impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. The PATH is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the QB. PATH does not move once the quarterback moves. If the "path or line" is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense'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, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player to avoid contact.**
8. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is once the flag is pulled
  - A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

## **Section X**

## Penalties

- **General**

- The referees 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 head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
- Games or halves 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.
- Spot fouls in end zone: Defensive (Ball on one-yard line)/Offensive (Safety)

- **Defensive Spot Fouls**

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic First Down (AFD)
Holding	+5 yards and Automatic First Down (AFD)
Stripping	+10 yards and Automatic First Down (AFD)

- **Offensive Spot Fouls**

Screening or Blocking	-10 yards and Loss of Down (LOD)
Charging	-10 yards and Loss of Down (LOD)
Flag Guarding	-10 yards and Loss of Down (LOD)

- **Defensive Penalties**

Defensive Unnecessary Roughness (Pulling ball carrier's uniform to force them to the ground)	+10 yards and Automatic First Down (AFD)
Defensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	+10 yards and Automatic First Down (AFD)
Offside	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage & AFD
Illegal Rush (Starting Rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage & AFD
Illegal Flag Pull (Before Receiver has the ball) (Pulling ball carrier's uniform to stop momentum)	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage & AFD
Roughing the Passer	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage & AFD

Taunting	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage & AFD
Illegal Procedure (Illegal Rushing Procedure)	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage no LOD

- **Offensive Penalties**

Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	-10 yards and loss of down (LOD)
Offensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	-10 yards and loss of down (LOD)
Offside/False Start	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage & LOD
Illegal Forward Pass (Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage & LOD
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage & LOD
Illegal Motion (More than one person moving)	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage & LOD
Delay of Game	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage & LOD
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage & LOD
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage & LOD