

# USSSA

# Flag Football



United States Specialty Sports Association

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### Mission Statement:

USSSA Flag Football is committed to providing a safe, positive, and competitive environment for youth and adults to participate. USSSA has created a program that offers several divisions of play to appeal to all athletes regardless of skill level. With this program, we hope to promote a positive environment throughout communities worldwide.

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## I. The Field

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- The field shall be a rectangular area with dimensions, lines, zones, goals, and markers as shown on the accompanying diagram. It is recommended that there be a slope of  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch per foot from the center of the field to each sideline.
- Yard line markers, constructed of soft pliable material, should be no closer than 5 yards.
- Lines should be marked with a non-caustic material.
- End lines and sidelines shall be continuous and at least 4 inches wide.
- There will be one hash mark on each zone to gain. The hash mark should be placed in the center of the field.
- Team boxes shall be marked on each side of the field. They will be located between the 20yd lines and 1yd off the sideline.
- Each goal line will be within the confines of the end zone. Thus, if a ball carrier breaks the plane of the goal line, he has entered into the end zone.

Diagram 1:

## II. The Game

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- Number of Players
  - The game will be played with 2 teams consisting of 8 players each. A minimum of 7 players needs to be present to avoid a forfeit. A team may start a game with seven players and increase to eight once an additional player arrives. A team may go down to seven players due to injury only and continue play. If a team loses a player to ejection and there is no eligible substitute, the offending team will forfeit at that point.
- Team Captains
  - Each team will designate to the referee players (offensive and defensive) who will act as the team captains. The captains are the ONLY members of the team who will speak to the officials. Captains will make all team decisions, including making choices on penalty situations.
  - Team captains shall participate in a coin toss to begin the game. The winner of the coin toss shall indicate whether his/her team wishes to play offense, defend a goal, or defer the option to the second half.
- Playing the Game
  - A team has 4 downs to reach a zone line in order to receive a first down. Teams may pass, run, or punt the ball during these downs. It is the object of the game for one team to carry or pass the ball across the opponent's goal line. The team that accumulates the most points wins the game. In co-rec. play the male may not advance the ball through the line of scrimmage.
  - Teams must have at least 7 players to avoid a forfeit. Offensive teams must have at least 3 players on the line of scrimmage at the start of each play.

- There is no contact allowed in flag football. In order to end a down, a defensive player must remove one of the offensive player's flags. Teams may screen block (forcing the opposition to go around them but without making contact with the opposition).
- Touchdowns are worth 6 points. After a touchdown is scored, the offensive team may elect to try for 1 extra point (from the 3-yard line) or 2 extra points (from the 10-yard line). In co-rec. play, if a female scores a touchdown or throws a legal forward pass and scores a touchdown the touchdown point value is 9 points.
- After a touchdown, the ball will be put in play on the scored upon team's 20 yard line. After a safety, the ball will be put in play at the 20-yard line of the team now in possession of the ball.

### III. Timing

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- Playing time will be 40 minutes total, broken into 2 halves that are 20 minutes each. Half time will last 5 minutes or playing time will be 50 minutes total with two 25-minute halves. If a 50-minute game is played, there will be a seven-play rule in effect at the 2-minute mark in the second half. There is no grace period. Game time is forfeit time.
- During the first half and first 18 minutes of the second half, the clock will run continuously, stopping only for team time outs, player injury, and officials' timeouts.
- Approximately 2 minutes prior to the end of each half, the back judge (timekeeper) will stop the clock and inform both captains of the 2-minute warning.
- During the final 2 minutes of the second half the clock will stop for the following:
  - Incomplete Pass.....Starts on Snap
  - Out of Bounds.....Starts on Snap
  - Team Time-out .....Starts on Snap
  - Touchback.....Starts on Snap
  - Score.....Starts on Snap (after PAT)
  - First Down.....Depends on previous play
  - Penalty.....Depends on previous play
  - Change of Possession.....Starts on Snap
  - Referee's Timeout.....Referee's Discretion
  - Ball touched on free kick and strikes ground.....Starts on Snap
- Each team is awarded 2 timeouts per half. Unused timeouts in the first half DO NOT carry over to the second half. Timeouts will last 1 minute.
- The referee may declare a timeout for any situation not covered by the rules.
- The "Mercy Rule": if one team is ahead by 17 or more points at the 2 minute warning of the second half, the final 2 minutes WILL NOT BE PLAYED. If a team goes ahead by 17 or more points within the final 2 minutes of the second half, the game will be stopped at that point.

## IV. Player/Team Equipment

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- Each player must wear flag belts that conform to USSSA specifications (2000 season only Flag-A-Tag Sonic Blast Flags will be allowed).
- Teams will provide their own footballs and flags.
- **UNIFORMS:** Jerseys - Must be matching with numbers on front and back. They must also be at least 5 inches above the waist when standing upright or full length and be tucked in at all times. Jerseys must have at least an 8-inch number on the back (a number on the front is recommended, but not mandatory). Pants or shorts - Must be similar in color with no belts, belt loops, or pocket of any kind. No sunglasses may be worn during competition. Exception: Prescription eyewear. No metal or removable spikes allowed.
- Players wearing illegal equipment will not be allowed to play. The following is a list of equipment that will be considered illegal: a. Headgear except if it is a sweatband or bandana. b. Jewelry of any kind. c. Pads or braces worn above the waist d. Shoes with metal, ceramic, or detachable cleats. e. Shirts or jerseys that do not remain tucked in. f. Pants or shorts with any belts, belt loops, pockets (point of emphasis), or exposed drawstrings. g. Leg or knee braces made of hard, unyielding materials.
- **BALL:** Any ball approved for High School, College, or the National Football League is a legal ball. All balls should be properly inflated, and the referee will have final approval on a ball's legality. An intermediate size ball may be used for the women, co-rec, and youth programs.
- **FLAG:** Each player on the field will wear 2 flags attached at the waist. They will be opposite each other on each side of the player's hip. The flag belt will be worn snug around the waist to prevent the turning of the flag belt when being removed. The flags must be a minimum of 12 inches long and 1-½ inches wide. Teammates must wear similar color flags. The official flag of USSSA for the 2000 season is the Flag-A-Tag Sonic Blast Flag Belt.
- Mouth guards are recommended for all players, but they are not mandatory.
- Stick-um and other substances similar in nature are illegal. Offending individuals will be penalized for unsportsmanlike behavior, and removed from the game until substance has been removed from their person.

## V. Definitions

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- **BASIC SPOT:** If a foul occurs during a down, the basic spot is determined by the action that occurs during that down. The basic spot will be the spot used for penalty enforcement.
- **BATTING:** Batting is intentionally striking or slapping the ball with the hand or arm.
- **BLOCKING:** Blocking is the act of obstructing an opponent by screening him with your body. Screen blocking is legal anywhere on the field. In blocking, no contact is allowed. The defense may not use their hands to assist in getting around a block, and the offense must keep their hands, feet, and knees within the frame of their body while attempting to screen block.
- **CAPTAINS:** Each team shall designate offensive and defensive field captains whom will speak to the refs on their team's behalf.
- **CATCH:** A catch is an act of establishing player possession of a live ball in flight. A player must make contact with the ground inbounds with the ball in

- his/her possession, unless an opponent's contact causes him/her to first touch out of bounds.
- If one foot first lands inbounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch or interception.
  - A catch by any kneeling inbounds player is a completion or interception
  - **CHARGING:** Charging is when an offensive player runs through a defensive player who has established position.
  - **CLIPPING:** Clipping is contact to the back of an opponent who is not the runner.
  - **COIN TOSS:** Three (3) CHOICES: Play Offense, Defend a Goal, Defer to Second Half.
  - **CONTACT:** In an attempt to remove the flag belt from a runner, a defensive player may contact the body and shoulders (incidental contact), but not the face, neck, or any part of the head of an opponent with their hands. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock down the runner in an attempt to remove the flag belt or break up a pass.
  - **DEAD BALL:** A dead ball is a ball not in play. The ball is dead during the time between downs.
  - **DEFLAGGING:** The ball carrier is down and the ball is dead when one of the ball carrier's flags are removed or fall off. It is legal to remove receiver's flags at the time the receiver first touches the football. Illegal deflagging is when the flags are removed by the opponent prematurely with the intent of preventing that particular player from participating in the remainder of the play.
  - **DIVING:** Diving to pull flag is legal. Diving to advance ball is illegal. Diving to block is illegal.
  - **DOWN:** A down is action that starts with a legal snap. A down ends when the ball becomes dead.
  - **ELIGIBLE RECEIVER:** All players are eligible to receive passes.
  - **ENCROACHMENT:** Encroachment denotes the position of a player whose person is beyond their scrimmage or restraining line. After the ready for play has been blown, no player may enter the neutral zone. If he/she does, they are guilty of encroachment.
  - **END ZONES:** The end zones will be 10 yds deep and located at opposite ends of the field between the goal lines and end lines. The end zones will be marked with soft, flexible pylons. The pylons should be 4 inches square, 18 inches high, and should be made of a substance that does not constitute a safety hazard. When placed properly, the goal line pylons are out of bounds at the intersection of the sidelines and the goal line extended. The end line pylons will be placed in a similar manner as the goal line pylons, but they will be placed at the intersection of the sidelines and the goal lines. A team's end zone is the one they are defending.
  - **EXTRA POINTS:** Successful run or pass from 3-yd line is 1 point and from the 10 yd line is 2 points.
  - **FAIR CATCH:** There are no fair catches.
  - **FIELD:** Regulation football field: 300' x 120' with (4) 20-yd zones and (2) 10 yd end zones.
  - **FIGHTING:** Fighting is any attempt by a player or nonplayer to strike or engage an opponent or teammate in a combative manner unrelated to the game of flag football. A player may be ejected for fighting regardless of whether or not contact was made with another individual.
  - **FLAGS:** All players on offense, defense & special teams **MUST** wear flags at all times.
  - **FLAG GUARDING:** Illegal use of ball carriers hand or arm to protect flag from being pulled. Examples of flag guarding are the stiff arm, dipping shoulder, and slapping of the defender's hand or arm. It is not flag guarding if the defender manages to successfully remove the flag, and the runner did not gain any additional yards while delaying the defender's attempt to remove the flag.

- **FORWARD AND BACKWARD PASS:** Forward and backward passes are determined by the initial direction of the ball. A backward pass that hits the ground is a fumble. It is dead at the spot that it hits. Only one forward pass is allowed per down. A forward pass is complete when the player secures possession, and the first part of his/her body to reach the ground is in bounds. If a player lands in bounds with the ball, but does not have control/possession of the ball until he/she touches a point outside of the field, the pass will be ruled incomplete.
- **FORWARD PROGRESS:** Forward progress will always be awarded to the team in possession of the ball. The ball should be marked at its furthest most point.
  - **EXAMPLE:** If a player is standing inbounds on the 2 yd line and he is holding the ball over the goal line, you would rule that the ball is in the end zone thus awarding a touch down.
- **FUMBLE:** A fumble is a loss of player possession other than handing, passing, or kicking the ball. All fumbles are dead at the spot. If a ball is fumbled in mid-air, the defender may recover the ball before it touches the ground and advance it.
- **HUDDLE & HUDDLE CLOCK:** A huddle is when two or more players of the same team are grouped together before a down. Teams will have 25 seconds from the time the ready for play is blown to the time delay of game is called.
- **HURDLING:** An attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees over a player who is on his/her feet or knees.
- **INADVERTANT WHISTLE:** An inadvertent whistle is a whistle that blows while the ball is still alive and in play. At the time of the inadvertent whistle, the team with possession of the ball has the option of replaying the down or the result of the play. If an inadvertent whistle is blown while the ball is loose (pass, pitch, or punt), the down must be replayed.
- **INELIGIBLE RECEIVER:** A receiver who leaves the playing field of his own accord is ineligible for the remainder of the play. If the ineligible receiver touches the ball before it is declared dead, it will be ruled as offensive pass interference. If an opponent forces the receiver out of bounds, they may remain eligible as long as they return to the playing field immediately.
- **INTENTIONAL GROUNDING:** Intentional grounding is a pass that is thrown in an area that does not have a receiver in close proximity to avoid a loss of yardage. Intentional grounding of the ball to stop the clock is legal if the quarterback throws the ball to the ground immediately upon receiving the snap.
- **INTERCEPTIONS:** An interception is the catch of an opponent's fumble or pass. Interceptions occurring in the end zone may be advanced by the defense.
- **KNEE DOWN:** If a player's knee touches the ground while his flags are still on he/she is down.
- **LINE OF SCRIMMAGE:** An imaginary plane drawn through the offensive and defensive neutral zone indicators forms the line of scrimmage. There must be a minimum of 3 offensive players on the line of scrimmage at snap during all offensive plays including punts. There are no restrictions on the placement of defensive players.
- **LINES:** The boundary lines are the end lines and sidelines. These lines are out of bounds.
- **LIVE BALL:** A live ball is a ball in play. A ball becomes live when the ball has been legally snapped and a down is in progress.
- **LOOSE BALL PLAY:** A loose ball is a live ball not in player possession during...
  - 1. A running play (i.e. a pitch).
  - 2. A scrimmage or free kick before possession is gained, regained or the ball is dead.
  - 3. The period of time after a legal forward pass is released, and before it becomes complete, incomplete, or intercepted.
- **LOSS OF DOWN:** Loss of down is the losing the right to replay a down.

- **MOMENTUM:** If a player's receives a punt or an interception and his original momentum carries him into the end zone and he is downed in the end zone, the play will be ruled a touchback.
- **MOTION:** Only 1 player is allowed in motion at the snap, and he/she may not be moving toward the line of scrimmage at the snap. If the original position of the motion person was on the line of scrimmage, they must be at least five yards deep at the time of the snap.
- **MUFF:** A muff is an unsuccessful attempt to catch a ball in which the player makes contact with the ball. All muffed punts and kick-offs that touch the ground are dead.
- **NEUTRAL ZONE:** The neutral zone is a one-yard space between the offensive line of scrimmage and the defensive line of scrimmage. The neutral zone will be marked with disk made of a soft plastic material.
- **NUMBER OF OFFICIALS:** USSSA recommends a minimum of 3 officials per game. Their positions should be Referee, Line Judge, and Back Judge. Their positions and responsibilities are diagramed in the index.
- **OFF SETTING PENALTIES:** If two or more live ball fouls occur during the same down and at least one penalty is against each team, the down will be replayed. If two or more dead ball fouls occur during a down, all will be marked off if accepted. The same will be true if a dead and a live ball foul occur during the same down; they will be marked off if accepted.
- **OUT OF BOUNDS:** A player or other person is out of bounds when any part of the person is touching anything, other than another player or game official, which is on or outside the sideline or end line. A ball in player possession is out of bounds when said player touches any part of the sideline or end line. A loose ball is out of bounds when it touches anything, including a player or game official, which is out of bounds.
- **OVERTIME PROCEDURES:** If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, we will play overtime. A coin toss will determine who will have 1<sup>st</sup> choice. The team will pick offense, defense, or goal to defend. The team losing the coin toss will decide the remaining choices. Once a goal has been established for overtime play, we will not switch sides of the field for any reason. Each team will receive the ball on the 20-yard line, and they will have 4 plays to score (1<sup>st</sup> down on 20 yd line). If they score, they will be allowed to attempt extra points. If the score is tied at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> overtime (both teams must have scored), we will play an additional overtime. If a team does not score, we will mark their penetration with a beanbag on the sideline. If both teams fail to score in any overtime the winner will be determined by deepest penetration.
- The team who had second choice in the previous overtime will have 1<sup>st</sup> choice in this overtime. This process will continue until there is a winner. Interceptions cannot be returned in overtime. If a the defense intercepts a pass, the ball will be blown dead and forward progress will be marked at the 20 yd line.
- **PADDING:** No pads are allowed.
  - **EXCEPTION:** If a pad is used to protect an injury, and the referee deems the material soft, pliable, and safe to other participants, the pad may be worn during competition.
- **PASSER'S ARM IN MOTION:** If ball is in passers hand when de-flagged, passer is down. If any contact regardless of intent or severity is made with passer's arm while he/she is attempting to complete a pass, roughing the passer will be called.
- **PASS INTERFERENCE:** It is forward pass interference when any player on offense or defense interferes with an eligible opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch or bat the pass. It is also pass interference when an opponent screens the potential receiver's eyes. It is also pass interference if an ineligible receiver touches a forward pass.

- **PLAYERS ON LINE:** A player who is breaking the plane of the center's body is considered on the line of scrimmage. A player on the line of scrimmage may not receive a snap.
- **PROTECTED SCRIMMAGE KICK/PUNT:** A protected scrimmage kick is one that does not allow either team to advance beyond their scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked. A protected scrimmage kick **MUST** be a punt. The defense may not make an attempt to block the punt. The offense must announce that they are punting before the ready for play is blown. Quick kicks are not allowed. The only way a team may change the option of punting or not punting is by calling a time-out. The receiving team must be allowed a chance to field a punt in the air before it hits the ground.
- **READY FOR PLAY:** Ready for play signifies the referee has signaled the ball may be put in play by snap and the 25-second clock has begun.
- **REMOVING THE FLAG BELT:** When one flag is clearly removed from the runner in possession of the ball, the down shall end and the ball is declared dead. A flag is considered removed at the point when the flag is no longer adjoined to its socket. If a flag is inadvertently dislodged and falls to the ground while a player is in possession of the ball, the runner in possession of the ball is down, and the ball is blown dead. A player is also ruled down if his/her flag belt is removed. A player, in an attempt to remove a flag belt, **MAY** leave his/her feet.
- **RUNNER:** The ball carrier may not lower his head or shoulder into a defensive player. A defensive player has a right to any spot on the field, and the runner must attempt to avoid contact at all times. Spins are legal. The runner may also place the ball on the ground to maintain their balance as long as they maintain control and possession of the ball. Flag guarding will not be called in this instance, if the referee feels the runner did not intentionally place the ball on the ground to avoid having his/her flag pulled.
- **SAFETY:** A safety is awarded to the defense when the offense causes the ball to become dead in their end zone. The defense will become the offense and take control of the ball on their own 20-yard line.
- **SCORING:**
  - Touchdowns = 6 points
  - Extra Points = 1 point (Run or pass from 3 yd line)
  - Extra Points = 2 pts (Run or pass from 10 yd line)
  - Extra Points = 2 pts (Return extra point try by defense)
  - Safety = 2 points
  - Forfeited Game = 7 - 0
- **SERIES OF DOWNS:** A series of downs will consist of four consecutive down numbered in sequence one through four. If a team fails to reach the zone line to gain in the allotted number of downs a change in team possession will occur.
- **SEVEN PLAYS:** At the 2-minute mark of each half, the clock will be suspended and there will be only seven plays left in the half. If a team accepts a penalty that would normally result in the replaying of a down, the play will not be lost. If a team accepts a penalty that results in a loss of down, the play will not be repeated.
- **SHIFT:** A shift is the action of one or more offensive players who, after a huddle or after taking set positions, move to a new set position before the ensuing snap. If there is a shift, all players must be set for one second before the snap.
- **SNAPS:** A snap is the legal act of passing the ball backward from its position on the ground. Direct snaps are illegal. Anyone receiving a snap must be at least 2 yds off the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap. If a player who had an initial position on the line of scrimmage has not established a new position by being set for one second in the backfield receives the snap, he/she must be at least five yards deep at the time of the snap. A snap does not have to pass through the legs to be legal.
- **STRIPPING:** Stripping or batting of the ball while in possession of another player is illegal.



- **SUBSTITUTIONS:** There will be free substitution as long as players being substituted for are off the field prior to the next snap or are out of the area of play and are departing the field in haste.
- **TEAM BOX:** The team box is between the 20-yd lines and one yard off the sideline. Teams must use opposite sidelines for their team areas.
- **TEAM DESIGNATIONS:** The team in possession of the ball is the offense. Their opponent is the defense.
- **TIME-OUTS:** Two (2) time-outs per half will be given to each team. Time-outs will not carry over from the first half to the second half. Unused time-outs from the second half may be carried over to overtime. One additional time-out per overtime period will be awarded to each team. No team may ever call two consecutive time-outs. One play must be run before another time-out by the same team is called. Players who participated in the previous play are the only ones who may call time-outs. Teams may use time-outs to change their choice on extra points from 1 to 2 point tries or vice versa and on fourth down punting choices.
- **TRIPPING:** Tripping is the act of using the lower leg to impede an opponent's progress.
- **TWO MINUTE WARNING:** An official time-out will take place at the 2-minute warning of each half. If a play is going on at the time the two-minute mark is reached, the official will call time-out after the completion of that play.
- **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT:** No profanity will be allowed. No baiting or taunting of an opponent shall be tolerated. Individuals who participate in a physical altercation with an official, player, coach, fan, security officer, or tournament official will be disqualified from competition until the league commissioner or tournament committee has made a final ruling.

## VI. Rules of the Game

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- **Delay of Game:** The ball must be put in play promptly and legally. The following are examples of delay of game:
  - 1. Failure to snap within 25 seconds of the ready to play whistle.
  - 2. Putting the ball in play before it is declared ready to play.
  - 3. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.
  - 4. Failure to kick the ball immediately after receiving the snap on a protected scrimmage kick.
 PENALTY: Delay of game, 5 yards from the spot of the snap.
- **Substitutions:** No substitute may enter during a down. Between downs any number of eligible substitutes may replace players. Anyone entering the field of play between downs, must enter the huddle at some point, and must participate in the next play. All players must be within 15 yards of the huddle before every play. PENALTY: Sub-Infraction, 5 yards from the basic spot.
- **Live Ball:** A dead ball, having been declared ready for play, becomes a live ball when it is snapped or kicked legally.
- **Dead Ball:** A ball is declared dead when:
  - 1. It goes out of bounds.
  - 2. Any part of the runner, other than a hand or foot, touches the ground.
  - 3. A touchdown, touchback, safety or try for point is made.
  - 4. A protected scrimmage kick comes to rest on the ground and no player attempts to secure it.
  - 5. A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
  - 6. A backward pass or fumble by a player touches the ground (a snap that hits the ground before reaching the intended receiver, is declared dead at

- the spot it hits the ground). Fumbles become dead balls at the spot of contact with ground. Muffed punts also become dead balls at spot.
- 7. A forward pass is legally completed, or a player catches a loose ball on, above, or behind the opponent's goal line.
  - 8. A runner has a flag removed by a defender or inadvertently has a flag fall off.
  - 9. A passer is deflagged prior to releasing the ball.
  - 10. A muff of a free or protected scrimmage kick strikes the ground.
  - 11. An official blows his/her whistle inadvertently during a down.
- **Inadvertent Whistles:**
    - 1. On occasion, an official may blow his/her whistle inadvertently, stopping play during a time when play should not normally be stopped. When an inadvertent whistle is sounded, the ball is declared dead, and the following options are available.
    - 2. If a whistle is blown while a team has the ball, the team that has the ball may choose to put the ball in play at the spot of the whistle or replay the down.
    - 3. If a whistle is blown when the ball is loose from a fumble, backward pass, illegal kick or illegal forward pass the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down. 4. If a whistle is blown during a legal forward pass or a free or protected scrimmage kick the ball is replaced to the previous spot and the down is replayed.
      - \* If a foul occurs during any of the above downs, an accepted penalty shall be administered as in any other play situations. When the foul is accepted, disregard the inadvertent whistle.
  - **Zone Line to Gain:** The zone line to gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead shall be the determining factor. When any part of the ball breaks the zone line to gain, the offense will be awarded a new series of downs. Each zone line to gain should be marked with some type of soft plastic cone or similar structure intended to indicate where each zone line to gain is on the field.
  - **Kicking the Ball:**
    - 1. There are no kick offs in flag football. Protected scrimmage kicks (punts) will be the only form of kicking allowed.
    - 2. There are no fair catches. Any signal given by the receiving team on a protected scrimmage kick should be ignored.
    - 3. If an inbounds free kick comes to rest and no player of either team attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the receiving team at the dead ball spot.
    - 4. If any scrimmage kick lands on or behind the goal line, the ball will be dead, and a touch back will be awarded.
    - 5. Out of bounds scrimmage kicks will be put in play at the last point at which they crossed the sideline.
    - 6. Protected Scrimmage Kick: The offensive team must have at least 3 players within one yard of their scrimmage line and all players must remain motionless (except for punter) until the kick is made.  
PENALTY: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
    - 7. The kicker must be at least 2 yards behind the scrimmage line when receiving the snap and must kick immediately and in a continuous motion.  
PENALTY: Delay of game, 5 yards from the previous spot.
    - 8. The receiving team must be allowed a chance to field the ball in flight without interference.
    - PENALTY: Kick Catch Interference, 10 yards from previous spot or be awarded possession at the spot of first touching.

- **Snapping, Handing, and Passing the Ball:**
  - 1. The team in possession of the ball is responsible for retrieving the ball after a down. The officials are no longer responsible for placing the ball on the scrimmage line.
  - 2. No player on the defense may encroach, touch the ball, nor make contact with opponents or in any way interfere with them before the snap of the ball. This includes standing in the neutral zone.  
PENALTY: Encroachment, 5 yards from the previous spot (Two consecutive encroachments by the defense will result in a 10-yard penalty if the first encroachment penalty was declined)
  - 3. No offensive player shall make a false start. A false start includes simulating a charge or start of play (the offense may not move). This penalty is enforced whether the ball is snapped or not.  
PENALTY: Dead ball foul, illegal procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
  - 4. The offensive team must have at least 3 players on their scrimmage line at the time of the snap. All players must be inbounds.  
PENALTY: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
  - 5. An offensive player may be in motion ANY distance from the line of scrimmage provided he/she is not moving towards the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap and he/she did not have an initial position on the line of scrimmage. If initial position was on line of scrimmage, person in motion must be five yards deep at time of snap.  
PENALTY: Illegal Motion, 5 yards from the previous spot.
  - 6. Before the snap, offensive players who attempt to shift positions must come to a complete stop and remain stationary in legal position for at least 1 second prior to the snap.  
PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
  - 7. The snap can be passed back to the receiver in any manner provided it is a continuous motion and starts from the ground.  
PENALTY: Dead Ball, illegal snap, 5 yards from the line of scrimmage.

- **Forward and Backward Passing:**

NOTE: The initial direction of the pass determines if it is forwards or backwards.

- 1. A Forward Pass is Illegal:
  - a. If the passer crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball leaves his/her hand.
  - b. If intentionally thrown to the ground or out of bounds to prevent loss of yardage.
  - c. If there is more than one forward pass.
  - d. If there is no receiver in the immediate vicinity.

PENALTY: Illegal forward pass, 5 yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down

NOTE: It is LEGAL for a player to run the ball over the line and then: (1) pass the ball backwards into the backfield and then throw a forward pass or (2) run the ball over the line of scrimmage and then retreat back behind the line and then throw a forward pass. 2. Simultaneous catches are declared dead balls and possession is awarded to the offense at the spot of the catch.

- **Safety = 2 points:**
  - 1. It is a safety when:
    - a. A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line, and it becomes dead there in his/her team's possession.  
EXCEPTION: If a player's momentum carries him/her into the end zone and the ball is declared dead there, the possession is given to the player making catch at the spot where the pass was intercepted or the kick was caught.
    - b. An offensive player commits any foul for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from a spot in his/her end zone.  
NOTE: When a safety is scored, the ball belongs to the team who was previously on defense. The team will receive the ball at their own 20-yard line and be awarded a new series of downs.
- **Personal Fouls:**  
No player shall:
  - 1. Punch, strike, steal or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
  - 2. Trip an opponent.
  - 3. Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
  - 4. Throw the runner to the ground.
  - 5. Hurdle another player.
  - 6. Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
  - 7. Make any contact with an opponent deemed as unnecessarily rough outside the rules.
  - 8. Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
  - 9. Clip (contact from behind) an opponent.
  - 10. Hold or tackle a runner.
  - 11. Chuck or check a receiver at the line.
  - 12. Illegal Deflagging
  - 13. Dive to Advance Football  
PENALTY: Personal Foul, 10 yards, from the end of the run.
  - 14. Rough the passer.  
PENALTY: Roughing passer, 10 yards from end of run or from previous spot if pass is incomplete and an automatic first down.
- **Blocking/Rushing:**
  - 1. The offense may only block without creating any contact. The blocker acts as a screen to ward off defenders. Offensive players must have their hands at their sides, crossed in front of them, or behind their backs when screen blocking.  
PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards from the previous spot.  
NOTE: If an illegal block occurs in the offensive backfield, the penalty is enforced from the SPOT of the foul (all but one principle)
  - 2. Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands MAY NOT be used as a wedge to contact the opponent.  
PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards from the previous spot.
  - 3. The responsibility for avoiding contact rests with the ball carrier. They must show the officials they made an effort to avoid contact. The ball carrier will not deliberately run or drive into a defensive player. A ball carrier may spin or jump but realize that while spinning or jumping he is in a State of Non-Control and should contact occur as a result of the uncontrolled momentum, he will be penalized.  
PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards from the spot of foul.

- **Flag Guarding:**
  - 1. Runners may not guard the flag belt, either intentionally or unintentionally, to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. Flag guarding includes, but is not limited to:
    - a. Swinging the hands or arms over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging or placing the ball over the flag belt for the same purpose.
    - b. Lowering the shoulders or placing the arm over the flag belt.
    - c. Stiff arming an opponent.
    - d. Using the ball to protect the flags.

PENALTY: Flag guarding, 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul.

- **Last Man Back:**
  - 1. A touchdown or extra point will be awarded if in an official's judgment, an offensive or defensive player who has obviously broken loose and has an apparent touchdown made is tackled, held, or deliberately pushed out of bounds. The penalty will be unsportsmanlike conduct, and it will be enforced on the next down.
- **Illegal Equipment:**
  - 1. An infraction of using too small of a football will be an automatic penalty of reversing possession of the football the football at the place of the last snap prior to discovery of the illegal ball, if the ball was used for one play. If the illegal ball is discovered before the snap, the ball will be removed and replaced with a legal ball.

## VII. Penalty Enforcement

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### 5-YARD PENALTIES:

- Delay of Game (Dead Ball), 5 yards fps
- Encroachment (Dead or Live Ball), 5 yards fps
- False Start (Dead Ball), 5 yards fps
- Illegal Snap (Dead Ball), 5 yards fps
- Player Out of Bounds When Ball is Snapped, 5 yards fps
- Offensive Player Illegally in Motion, 5 yards fps
- Illegal Shift, 5 yards fps
- Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yds/loss of down/sof
- Intentional Grounding, 5 yds/loss of down/sof
- Helping the Runner, 5 yards/spot of foul
- CO-REC: Male runner w/ball over line of scrimmage Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from previous spot

## 10-YARD PENALTIES:

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct (live), 10 yards/eor
  - Unsportsmanlike Conduct (dead) 10 yds/fps
  - Steal/Strike/Attempt to Steal Ball, 10 yards/fsf
  - Trip an Opponent, 10 yards/fsf
  - Contact with Opponent on Ground, 10 yards/fsf
  - Throw Runner to Ground, 10 yards/fsf
  - Hurdle Another Player, 10 yards/fsf
  - Drive or Run into Player, 10 yards/fsf
  - Clipping, 10 yards/fsf
  - Tackling, 10 yards/fsf
  - Roughing the Passer, 10 yards
  - Plus automatic 1st down from the previous spot
  - Illegal Use of the Hands (defense), 10 yards/fps
  - Illegal Use of the Hands (offense), 10yds/fps  
UNLESS it was behind the line
  - Pass Interference, 10 yards, plus (defense) automatic 1st down from previous spot  
or (offense) loss of down, from previous spot
  - Flag Guarding, 10 yards from spot of foul
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  - **VIII. Co-Rec. Exceptions**
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- **PLAYERS:** A game is played between two teams of 8 players, 4 men and 4 women. Teams with 7 players shall be 4 men and 3 women or 3 men and 4 women.
- **THE BALL:** A regular or intermediate size football may be used.
- **LINE OF SCRIMMAGE:** The offensive team must have at least 4 players on their scrimmage line. Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
- **MALE RUNNER:** The offensive team males cannot advance the ball through their scrimmage line. Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot. There are no restrictions: during a run by a male runner once the ball is beyond the offensive scrimmage line, during a run by a female runner, and after a change of possession.
- **OPEN AND CLOSED PLAYS:** Prior to each play, the referee will designate whether a play is open or closed. If a play is open, all offensive players are eligible to receive a pass. If a play is closed, the next pass must either be thrown by a female or caught by a female to be legal. A play becomes closed once there is a male-to-male pass completion regardless of weather or not positive yards were gained. In order to open the passing down back up, the offense must complete a pass to a female or complete a pass thrown by a female for positive yards.
- **MALE-TO-MALE COMPLETION:** During the offensive team's possession there may not be 2 consecutive legal forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver, the next legal forward pass completion must involve either a female passer or a female receiver for positive yardage. Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from the previous spot and a loss of down. There are no other restrictions concerning a male passer completing legal forward passes to a female receiver, or female to female, or female to male. Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completing is "open" or "closed."
- **SCORING:** If a female player scores a touchdown, the point value is 9. If a female player throws a legal forward pass and any offensive team member scores



a touchdown, the point value is 9. All other scores would receive the same point values as the men and women's divisions.

## IX. 9 Man Exceptions

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- Teams must have at least 8 players to avoid a forfeit.
- Offensive teams must have at least 5 players on the line of scrimmage at the start of each play.
- Blocking is allowed in 9-man flag football, 3 interior linemen are ineligible to receive pass. As many as 7 can line up on the line of scrimmage. Ineligible linemen can only catch a pass if tripped by eligible receiver. No two on one blocking except in two on one zone (3 by 6 yard zone around ball).
- Center must snap ball through legs in one continuous motion from the ground.
- In 9 man flag, after a touchdown, the ball will be kicked from 30-yard line to the team scored upon. The ball must travel at least 10 yards toward the opponent's goal. Minimum 5-man line allowed during all kicking situations. Kick can be made from ground or kicking tee, and can be held by player. No onside kicks allowed. After a safety a ball will be punted
- Mouth guards are mandatory.
- In 9 man, center must snap ball with a guard on each side. There must be at least one eligible player lined up outside each guard.
- Blocking using hands in front of the body is permitted. No two on one blocking, except in two on one zone (3 by 6 yard zone around ball). No blocking below the waist or above the shoulders. No blocker can leave his feet while attempting to block. No blocking with elbows or shoulders
- Illegal two on one blocking (out of zone) - 10 yards from previous spot.
- Blocking below the waist, 10 yards from spot of foul
- Kickoff out of bounds. Choice of spot or 35-yard line.

## X. 4-ON-4 EXCEPTIONS

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### THE GAME

- The field is a maximum of 60 yards by 40 yards. The field will be comprised of two ten-yard end zones and two equal playing zones usually 20 yards each.
- The standard game will be 25 minutes.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at their 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross mid-field. Once a team crosses mid-field, they have (3) plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to get a first down or a touchdown, the defense takes possession of the ball and they take over on their 5-yard line. All possession changes except interceptions start on the offense's 5-yard line. The clock will stop in the **last minute** of the game on incompletions, penalties, touchdowns, out of bounds, and change of possession. **No contact is allowed!**

## THE PLAYERS / TOURNAMENT REGULATIONS

- Teams must field a minimum of four (4) players at all times. A team must start the game with 4 players.
- Teams rosters consist of a maximum of six (6) players.
- Players may only play on one (1) team during a tournament. No jumping between teams in your same and/or other divisions.
- All players must be on and have signed the official tournament roster form before playing in any game. You will risk forfeiting any games in which a player is not on the roster.
- Teams cannot play any games until a completed roster form is turned in to the Tournament Director.
- No roster additions or changes may be made after the start of the tournament.
- Any games in which a team plays with a roster infraction be forfeited. Including any play off or tournament games.

## SCORING

- Touchdown = 6 points, Extra point = 1 (5 yards out); 2 (12 yards out), Safety = 2 points.

## BLOCKING

- Any type of blocking or screening is illegal

## RUNNING

- The Quarterback CANNOT run the ball. The QB can only run the ball if he or she has taken a hand-off. Only directed hand-offs behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Anyone behind the line of scrimmage can receive a hand-off. No laterals or pitches of any kind, anywhere on the field. The player(s) who takes the handoff can throw the ball as long as he does not pass the line of scrimmage. Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush. Once the ball has been handed-off, the 7-second pass rule is ignored. Defensive players cannot cross the line of scrimmage, during a direct hand-off play, until the ball is handed off.

## PASSING

- All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage. Shovel passes are allowed but must be beyond the line of scrimmage. QB has a 7-second "pass clock". If a pass is not thrown within the 7 seconds, play is ruled dead, with loss of down. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second clock rule is no longer in effect. Interceptions can be returned. If a penalty occurs on an interception return by the offensive team (previous), the penalty will be assessed from the end of the run. If a penalty occurs on the intercepting team, the penalty will be enforced at the spot of the foul. The team intercepting the ball must have acquired possession before they committed the penalty or the possession will revert back to the offense along with the penalty enforcement.



## RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including QB if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).

## RUSHING THE QB

- All players that rush the passer must be minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the QB. Players not rushing the QB may defend on the Line of Scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-yard rush rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. The referee will designate the 7 yards with a marker. Defenders crossing the line of scrimmage inside the 7 yards mark must wait until the ball is handed off.

## PENALTIES

- All penalties will be assessed from the original Line of Scrimmage. After an interception, penalties will be assessed from the point of the interception.
  - Defensive:
    - Off sides
    - Interference/Face-guarding
    - Illegal Contact (holding, blocking, etc.)
    - Illegal Flag Pull
    - All defensive penalties are 10 yards and automatic first down.
  - Offensive:
    - Illegal Motion (more than 1 person moving, false start, motion, etc.)
    - Illegal Forward Pass (including pass received behind line of scrimmage, illegal pitch)
    - Offensive Pass Interference (illegal pick play, receiver pushing off defender)
    - Flag Guarding
    - Defensive Delay of game = clock will stop until play is snapped
    - All offensive penalties are 10 yards (from line of scrimmage) and loss of down.

## TIMEING

- 30 second huddle clock. The clock will start when the ball is spotted. Referee will issue a 10-second warning. Each team has four (4) 60-second time-outs each game. Clock will stop on time-outs. Officials can stop the clock on their own discretion.

## OVERTIME

- Each team will start from the 10-yard line, working into their end zone. You will have two (2) plays to attempt to score. If a team does score, they are eligible for an extra point attempt. The game is over when each team had possession of the ball an equal amount of times, and one team was able to score more than their opponent was.

## XI. Youth Flag Football Exceptions

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- Youth participants will be required to wear a mouthpiece. Mouthpieces will be optional for the quarterbacks while on offense.
- The recommended field size is 80yards by 40 yards. The field will be broken into three 15-yard zones and two 10-yard end zones.
- There will be no punts for age groups 11 and under. On fourth down a team will be asked if they wish to punt. If the team wishes to punt, the ball will be advanced 20 yards. The punt will never be advanced inside of the 20-yard line.
- Teams will be comprised of 7 players each. Local leagues may modify this number for league play, but all tournaments will require teams to be made up of at least 7 players.
- A youth size ball will be used for all age groups. U-14 and under will use the youth ball and U-15 and up will use the junior ball.
- Extra Points will be played as follows, 1-point tries from the 3-yard line and 2 point tries from the 5-yard line.
- All rules not covered here will be covered under the 8 man screen rules.

## XII. Officials

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- Officials are the representatives of the Organization or League by which they have been engaged or assigned to a particular game, and as such are authorized and required to enforce each and every section and part of these rules, from beginning to end.
- The officials should not be in any way connected with either team competing.
- The official uniform of USSSA will include a black and white striped officials shirt, an official USSSA official's hat, (the referee may wear an all white fitted hat), black polished cleats or sneakers, and black belt. The officials may wear black shorts with white socks or black pants with black socks. All umpires must be dressed alike
- The officials should have all proper equipment. This includes but is not limited to a beanbag, yellow officials flag, neutral zone indicators, stopwatch and whistle.
- The referee has the authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. The referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to judgment.
- The officials' jurisdiction begins 15 minutes prior to the game and extends through the referee's declaration of the end of the fourth period or overtime.
- The officials shall have the authority to make decisions for infractions of the rules. The use of any replay or television monitoring equipment by the officials in making any decision relating to the game is prohibited.
- The referee's decision to forfeit a game is final.
- The referee will determine if any and all equipment (including any type of brace) is legal before play begins.
- Protests of judgment calls are not allowed. The only protest that will be allowed will be concerning player eligibility and rule application. If a team files protest during a game concerning a rule application, the team must notify the head referee before the ball is snapped for the next play. If the ball is snapped, the teams have missed their chance to protest that particular play or rule interpretation. After informing the referee of the protest, the tournament staff will make a ruling concerning the protest. Protest concerning player eligibility will be resolved at the time of the protest if possible. If they cannot be resolved at that time, the

tournament/league director will resolve the protest ASAP. If the protest is valid, the error will be corrected and play will resume. If the protest is found to be invalid, the protesting team will be charged with a time-out. If they do not have a time-out remaining, the team will be assessed a 10 yard personal foul. A team is allowed only one protest within the final two minutes of a game.

### **XIII. Conduct of Players & Others**

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- A player will be ejected if he/she receives 2 unsportsmanlike conduct penalties in a game.
- Players are required to stand 1 yard behind the sidelines and fans are required to stand at least 3 yards behind the sidelines and between the 20-yard lines of the playing field. Players and/or fans that venture beyond the 20 yard lines will be given a warning to move, and further violation of this rule will warrant disqualification or removal from the game site.
- Fans, coaches, and spectators are a part of a team and any fouls they commit will go against their team.
- If the manager or coach cannot control the behavior of his fans or players, the officials or tournament director may forfeit the game.

### **XIV. Eligibility**

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- No player shall be permitted to play USSSA flag football if he is presently or has during the current season been a member of any professional, semi-professional, college, high school or middle school football team.
- Any player who has played professional football shall be ineligible for one calendar year from his last day on the professional team's roster. Ex-professional players may only play in Class A. Players who have competed in the Canadian Football League, National Football League, Arena Football League I, and the Extreme Football League will be designated as professional players.
- Semi-professional players may play no lower than Class B. Semi-Professional is defined as anyone who has been played to play football by some type of organized league other than the ones listed above.
- Players shall remain classified as professional, semi-professional, or ex-collegiate for a period of 10 years after their last date on their respective rosters.
- Any team violating the player eligibility requirements of USSSA or their local league shall forfeit all games in which the ineligible players participated.

### **XV. Classifications of Leagues**

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- Class A: Teams are not restricted by the number of professional, semi-professional, or ex-collegiate varsity football players they may have on their roster.
  - Class B, C, and D teams will be classified according to their USSSA points and team strength.
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\* USSSA reserves the right to place a team in a higher classification if they deem that is the appropriate classification for that team. Any team who competes with players who are ineligible in a league will forfeit all games played in be ineligible players. In the case of a qualifying, state, regional, or national tournament the team will be removed from that tournament immediately and barred from tournament participation for the remainder of the season.

\*\* Any rules not specifically covered in hear will be covered under the National Federation Rulebook.