



Mad Dogs Flag Football of Palm Coast
Rule Book | 2021

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New (2021) & Emphasized/Clarified Rules

NEW for 2021: Shortened Passing Clock & Running QBs for 10U and Above (Pg 10)

(10U, 12U & 15U) The quarterback has a five-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within five seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is placed at the spot where the QB stood. Once the ball is handed off, the 5-second rule is no longer in effect.

(10U, 12U & 15U) When the quarterback is rushed, he becomes an eligible runner. The rusher must cross the line of scrimmage before the quarterback can advance with the ball.

Special Teams Clarification (Pg 15)

Any kickoff or punt that lands or rolls into the endzone shall be immediately ruled a touchback. Grounding/Kneeling the ball in the end zone results in a touchback. On the kickoff, if the returner bobbles the ball and it hits the ground the returner can pick the ball up and run.

Rules Challenges (Pg 9)

A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official’s rule interpretation with the officiating. If the official’s ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.

Only officials can appeal to Mad Dogs staff for a rule clarification and the use of video will not be allowed.

Running: Spotting the Ball/Runners Leaving Their Feet/Other Players Downfield (Pg 9)

Paraphrased: See Page 9 for more details

Spotting the Ball: In the field of play, the ball is spotted where the front foot of the runner is located. Special exceptions are made for breaking the first-down line/plane of the end zone.

Runners Leaving the Feet: Diving or leaping forward to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding. This does not apply to jump cuts, spin moves or avoiding the defensive player. This rule is entirely to avoid hurdling or diving forward—because of safety.

Other Ball Carriers Downfield: The rule reads, “No INTENTIONAL blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.” The rule has NEVER been that players without the ball should stop at the line of scrimmage. The rule is about intent...is the player trying to block OR is the runner purposefully running behind his other players as blockers.

I. Game

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense or to defer to the second half. The team which does not choose possession then chooses the direction they wish to start.
3. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
4. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
5. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line. (Or, in 10U and up, at the spot of the punt return)
6. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. (Or, in 10U and up, at the spot of the punt return)
7. At 6U and 8U: All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
8. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

II. Eligibility

All players' legal guardians must agree to the online waiver form at **MadDogsFootball.Net** at registration.

III. Equipment

- ☒ The league provides each player with an official flag belt and NFL FLAG team jersey.☒ Teams will use footballs provided by their league.
 - ☒ Players must wear shoes. Cleats are strongly encouraged. However, cleats with exposed☒ metal are never allowed and must be removed.
 - ☒ Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow☒ pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
 - ☒ Players must remove all jewelry and hats. (Except for cold weather knit caps)
 - ☒ Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
6. We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants☒ with belt loops or pockets must be taped. Games will not be delayed for a player to tape☒ up pockets.
 7. Shorts or pants cannot be the same color as flag belts.
 8. Mouth pieces are mandatory while in a es. Kids will not play without one.

IV. Terminology

Boundary Lines The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.

Line-to-Gain The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.

Offense The team with possession of the ball.

Defense The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.

Passer The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.

Rusher The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/ her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.

Downs (1-2-3-4) The offensive team has four attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. It must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.

Live Ball Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

Dead Ball Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.

Whistle Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.

Inadvertent Whistle Official’s whistle that is performed in error.

Charging An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.

Flag Guarding An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier’s flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner’s flags with a hand or arm.

Lateral A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.

Line of Scrimmage (LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.

Rush Line An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.

Shovel Pass A legal pitch attempted forward or beyond the line of scrimmage.

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

V. Field

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-run zones precede each end zone by 5 yards.
2. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before each end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

VI. Rosters

1. Home teams wear dark color jerseys
2. Visiting teams wear light color jerseys.
3. Teams must consist of at least six players with a maximum of 14 players.
4. Teams must start games with a minimum of six players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with five players on the field but no fewer than five.

VII. Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 40 minute continuous clock with four 10-minute quarters. Clock stops for timeouts, injuries or upon the referee's discretion.
2. Under two minutes in each half, normal football timing rules apply. The clock will stop on incompletions, and out-of-bounds, etc.
3. Halftime is five minutes.
4. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
5. Each team has two 30-second timeout per half.
6. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
7. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
8. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner.

Overtime format is as follows:

9. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
10. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
11. The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
12. Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of their own.
13. Example: Team A starts on offense and chooses to go for one point from the 5-yard line and is successful. Team B is then on offense and can choose to either go for one point from the 5-yard line to tie and force a second round of overtime or to go for two points from the 10-yard line for the win.
14. If the second team on offense in an overtime round fails to beat or match the team that went first, the team that went first wins.
15. Both teams must "go for two" from the 10-yard line starting with the third round of overtime.
16. The final points earned by the winning team in the final overtime will be added onto the winning team's total score. The losing team will not receive any additional points.
17. Example: End of regulation time, score is 14-14. Team A scores one point and Team B score two points. Team B wins with a final score of 16-14. Points are only added to total score from final round of overtime.
18. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
19. In overtime, each team receives one time out

VIII. Scoring

Touchdown: 6 points

PAT (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)

1. Note: 1 point PAT is pass only; 2 point PAT can be run or pass.
2. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line).
3. Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
4. Interceptions on can be returned on conversions for the same point total the offense had declared.
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down with the ball in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.

IX. Coaches

Coaches are expected to adhere to Mad Dogs Flag Football philosophies, coaching guidelines and code of conduct.

Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division. At the direction of officials, Coaches must move to the sidelines or 15-yards away from the L.O.S. before the snap of the ball.

X. 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 allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. **Play is ruled “dead” when:**
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - b. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
 - c. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - d. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - e. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - f. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - g. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - h. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - i. The pass clock expires.
 - j. Inadvertent whistle.
8. NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier’s feet were at the time of the fumble.
9. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

10. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation with the officiating. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.
11. Only officials can appeal to Mad Dogs staff for a rule clarification and the use of video will not be allowed.

XI. Running

1. In the field of play, the ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball-carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
2. NOTE: An exception to the above is on each line-to-gain/endzone. If the ball (not foot) crosses the line-to-gain, it will be considered a first down. If the ball (not foot) crosses the endzone, it will be considered a touchdown.
3. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap. Exception is made at 10U and above when the defense blitzes.
4. Handoffs or may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. Laterals must be behind or to the side. The offense may use multiple handoffs or laterals behind the line of scrimmage.
5. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Diving or leaping forward to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
9. "Jump cuts" are allowed, but must be straight up, backward, or laterally. Any player making contact with another player or attempting to go over another player while jumping will be called for charging.
10. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
11. No INTENTIONAL blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
12. Offensive players without the ball must make every effort to avoid blocking or screening in the open field.
13. No running with the ball-carrier.
14. 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.

XII. Passing

1. All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward.
2. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. Any pass thrown backwards or to the side is considered a lateral. An incomplete lateral constitutes a fumble and the ball is placed at the spot of the fumble.
4. A forward pass from behind the line of scrimmage thrown forward and received behind the line of scrimmage is still considered a forward pass.
5. (6U & 8U) The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is placed at the spot where the QB stood. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
6. (10U, 12U & 15U) The quarterback has a five-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is placed at the spot where the QB stood. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
7. (10U, 12U & 15U) When the quarterback is rushed, he becomes an eligible runner. The rusher must cross the line of scrimmage before the quarterback can advance with the ball.
8. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second/5-second clock, it is a safety.

XII. Receiving

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 inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the
6. yard line.
7. Interceptions are returnable. On conversions, interceptions may be returned for the same point total as the offense had declared.

XIV. Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. **A legal rush is:**
 - i. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7 yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush the quarterback.
 - b. **A penalty may be called if:**
 - I. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage).
 - II. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5 yards from line of scrimmage)
 - III. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage)
 - c. **Special circumstances:**
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback
 - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
 - iii. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
 - iv. 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. 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 and to avoid contact.**

- v. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when flag is pulled.
 - 1. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

XV. Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

XVI. Formations

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
2. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
3. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

XVII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
2. Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
 - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
 - d. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
 - e. Stay in the end zone area, not between fields.
 - f. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
7. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

XVIII. Penalties

i. General

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

Defensive Spot Fouls

Defensive Pass Interference

Automatic First Down

Holding

Automatic First Down

Stripping

Automatic First Down

Offensive Spot Fouls

Screening, Blocking or running with the ball carrier

-10 Yards and Loss of Down

Charging or jumping to avoiding the defender

-10 Yards and Loss of Down

Flag Guarding

-10 Yards and Loss of Down

Defensive Penalties

Defensive Unnecessary Roughness

+10 yards and automatic first down

Defensive Unsportsmanlike Content

+10 yards and automatic first down

Offside/False Start

-5 Yards from Line of Scrimmage

Illegal Forward Pass

-5 Yards from L.O.S. & Loss of Down

Offensive Pass Interference

-5 Yards from L.O.S. & Loss of Down

Illegal Motion

-5 Yards from L.O.S.

Delay of Game

-5 Yards from L.O.S.

Impeding the Rusher

-5 Yards from L.O.S. & Loss of Down

Illegal Procedure

-5 Yards from L.O.S.

XIX. Special Teams

The following only applies to 10U, 12U and 15U Games

Kickoffs

1. The game shall commence upon the referee's whistle to begin the kickoff.
2. The kickoff shall take place at the 10-yard PAT line
3. The ball will be considered live in the field of play until it is touched by a defender, rolls to a stop, travels out of bounds or the ball carrier for the returning team loses his flag.
4. Any kickoff or punt that lands or rolls into the endzone shall be immediately ruled a touchback. Grounding/Kneeling the ball in the end zone results in a touchback.
5. The kicking team must remain on sides during the kick/punt or be subject to a penalty.
6. Coaches are encouraged to develop kicking/punting and receiving skills in the participants. These rules have been adapted to penalize teams that do not play within the spirit of the game.
 - I. Kicking the ball out of bounds in an intentional manner will result in a 15-yard penalty from the spot out of bounds. Intentional and repetitive kicking out of bounds to avoid a return will lead to a bench warning and then forfeiture of the game.
 - II. UNINTENTIONAL kicking the ball out of bounds is still a penalty and will be assessed with the ball placed five yards behind the midfield line.
 - III. If the ball is touched by the kicking team at any time, the receiving team will be awarded the ball where it was touched.
7. If a fairly attempted kickoff fails to go seven yards, the receiving team will be awarded first down at a spot five yards behind the midfield line.
8. Touchbacks are spotted at the 5-yard PAT line.

Punting

1. The offensive team may elect to punt on 4th down.
2. Once a punt has been declared by an offense:
 - I. All defensive players must take position behind the rush line and may not rush the punter.
 - II. The punter shall have 7 seconds to kick the ball, failure to kick the ball within seven seconds shall result in loss of down and the offense will start at the spot of the foul.
 - III. False start by the offense shall result in a 5-yard penalty and re-punt.
3. The punting team must remain behind the line of scrimmage until the ball has been kicked. Offsides will be assessed at the end of the punt return.
4. Fake punts are not allowed. Teams must declare a punt.
5. Punts traveling out of field of play will be spotted where the ball left the playing field.
6. If a ball is legally received in the field of play but run back into the endzone and the player is downed, a safety is enforced.

XIX. Playoff Seeding & Championships

1. At the end of the regular season, playoff/championship game announcements will be made by the league.
2. In smaller divisions (four teams), the top two teams will play for a championship.
3. In larger divisions (six+ teams) or in more competitive divisions (when decided by the league), there will be a single-elimination tournament to determine a champion.
4. Playoff Eligibility will be decided by win-loss record.
5. In terms of a tie, season points against total will be used as a tie breaker.
 - a. At the discretion of the official, any team found to be “running up the score” will be penalized. (Unsportsmanlike Conduct)
 - b. Repeated attempts to run up the score will be addressed by the league and are subject to the league’s code of conduct policy which may include penalties of game forfeiture or suspension.

Please Note: The playoff seedings automatically generated on MadDogsFootball.net are NOT official.