

YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL

OFFICIATING MANUAL



EVERGREEN PARK RECREATION DISTRICT

Mission Statement

The goal of the Evergreen Park & Recreation District's Youth Flag Football League is to provide a fun, recreational football experience in which players learn fundamentals, teamwork and sportsmanship while enjoying the game of football.

Expectations for Players

Players are expected to treat coaches, referees and league representatives with respect at all times, whether in practices or games. If a player is acting inappropriately during a practice or game, a conference might be needed with the coach, player, player's parent and the league supervisor all present to set specific expectations. Players will be given one warning regarding their behavior. Should a player continue to act in a disrespectful or disruptive manner, he/she will be removed from the league.

Players are also expected to act respectfully while on the field. If the coach notices disrespectful behavior, he/she should immediately substitute the player out of the game for a period of time. If a player is disrespectful to an official, he/she is subject to an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, which will result in an ejection from the game. Two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties during one season will result in the offending players removal from the league.

Expectations for Parents

Like players, parents are an integral part of the football experience for their children. As such, parents are also expected to act respectfully at all times. This includes acting in an appropriate manner at all clinics, practices, games, tournaments, etc. It also means treating those people in a position of authority (i.e. coaches, referees, field supervisors) with respect. Referees will be strongly encouraged to give an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty to the team if a parent is acting in an inappropriate manner. If a team receives two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties in one game, the game will be stopped and the offending team will lose by forfeit.

If a parent has a concern regarding the league, the referees, their child's team or the coach, a meeting should be scheduled with the league supervisor and all other necessary parties so that a solution can be reached.

Additionally, parents should sign off on the "Parents Code of Conduct" provided to them by the coaches at the first practice. The "Parents Code of Conduct" covers a variety of topics, including game etiquette.

Coaching Etiquette

Coaches set the tone for their respective teams. The best way to do this is to lead by example. Maintaining a calm demeanor and treating others with respect will carry over to the players. It also important to maintain control of your team at all times, especially as the previous game is finishing and your team is waiting to begin their game.

Coaches are also encouraged to put aside their desire to win to ensure that all players are receiving equal playing time and are given the opportunity to play various positions. EPRD discourages playing the "best" players at the skill positions all the time. Rather, each player should be given the opportunity to try a position at various times throughout the season. The only exception would be if a player informs you that they do not want to try a certain position.

General Overview

The mission of the EPRD Youth Flag Football League is to teach players basic football skills, while promoting teamwork and sportsmanship in a fun, non-contact setting.

- 1.) The Evergreen Park & Recreation District's Youth Flag Football League (YFFL) will be a five on five coed program offered to children ages 5 – 12.
 - 2.) Players will be divided into leagues based on the following age classifications:
 - 5 and 6 years old*
 - 7 and 8 years old*
 - 9 and 10 years old*
 - 11 – 12 years old*
- *Leagues may be altered based on the number of registrations in each classification.
- 3.) Teams will consist of a minimum of six players and a maximum of ten players on the roster, with five players on the field at one time.
 - 4.) To avoid a forfeit, teams must have at least 4 players to begin the game.
 - 5.) The playing field size for the YFFL will be 50 yards long by 25 yards wide, with seven yard end zones.
 - 6.) Games will consist of two 20-minute halves with a 5-minute half time. The clock will be a running clock and will stop on incomplete passes, out-of-bounds plays, timeouts, injuries, and scores only during the last minute of the each half. Should teams be tied at the end of regulation, the teams will play one overtime period. Each team will have one possession (4 plays) to score from mid-field. A coin toss will determine which team starts with the ball. Should a team score a touchdown, they will have the option of going for one or two. If both teams are tied after the overtime period, the game will end in a tie.
 - 7.) Each team has one 60-second timeout per half, and one 60-second time out in overtime.
 - 8.) The scoring system used in the YFFL will be:
 - Touchdowns - 6 points
 - Safety - 2 points
 - Extra Point - 1 point from 5 yards out or 2 points from 10 yards out (teams must choose which distance they will make their attempt from within 30 seconds of the score. Once a choice has been made, it cannot be changed for any reason.)
 - 9.) If a team is trailing by 17 points at any point in the second half, that team will begin each possession at mid-field as long as the difference remains 17 or greater. When the difference becomes less than 17, play will return to normal.
 - 10.) All rules, both covered and not covered, in this manual can be altered at any time by the program coordinator and/or field supervisor.

Playing Rules and Regulations

1.) Basic Rules of the EPRD's Youth Flag Football League

- A coin toss will begin each game. The team that wins the toss will have a choice of one of the following options:
 - Start the game on offense
 - Start the game on defense
 - Defer the choice to the second half
- The team that loses the toss will have a choice of the remaining options. At the start of the second half, teams will reverse sides and the team that started on defense will begin on offense.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at their 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross mid-field. If the offensive team fails to cross mid-field, possession of the ball changes and the opposite team starts their drive from their own 5-yard line.
- Once a team crosses mid-field, they will have four (4) plays to score a touchdown. If the offense passes mid-field, but fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on their own 5-yard line.
- The only time a team does not start a new possession from their own 5-yard line is on an interception. If an interception occurs, the intercepting team will begin where the intercepting player's flags are pulled.
- The offense begins each play by snapping the ball from the center to the quarterback. The ball can be snapped between the legs, or off to the side, to start play.
- The ball is ruled dead when:
 - A touchdown or safety is scored
 - The snap to the quarterback hits the ground.
 - The ball hits the ground at any time. There are no fumbles.
 - The ball carrier's knee or elbow touches the ground.
 - The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - The ball carrier's flags are legally removed, (Note: if the ball carrier's flags fall off inadvertently, play is stopped as if his/her flags were pulled).
 - A change of possession occurs.
- The ball is spotted where the ball carriers feet are when the flag is pulled, NOT where the ball is, or where the flag lands.
- Substitutions can be made on any dead ball. Coaches are encouraged to give every player an equal amount of playing time per game.
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Extra time may be given, at the referee's discretion.
- Contact blocking is prohibited in the YFFL. Contact by either the offense or defense will result in a penalty, unless the contact is deemed incidental. Players are allowed to use the shadow blocking technique, which similar to a screen in basketball.

2.) Running Plays

- The quarterback is allowed to run the ball at any time.
- Handoffs, laterals and pitches are allowed behind the line of scrimmage.
- The player who takes a handoff is permitted to throw the ball as long as he does not cross the line of scrimmage.
- There is a "No Power Running Zone" located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards on either side of mid-field designed to avoid short yardage power running situations. The "No Power Run Zone" means that teams must line-up in a standard formation with at least one wide receiver. Additionally, there can only be two lineman (center and one other) on the line in this zone.
- There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where fumbled and the offense retains possession.
- Direct snaps to the running back are allowed.

- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (i.e. no diving or hurdling).

3.) Passing

- The quarterback has unlimited time to throw the ball.
- Teams are only allowed one forward pass per down.
- Interceptions may be returned. Interceptions are the only change of possession that does not begin on the 5-yard line.
- If a passer crosses the line of scrimmage, and comes back behind the line of scrimmage and throws a pass, it is an illegal forward pass.

4.) Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes, including the quarterback after the ball has been handed off or a lateral has occurred behind the line of scrimmage.
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time after the team has set itself at the line of scrimmage.
- A player must have one foot in bounds to make a legal reception.
- Bumping a receiver off of the line is prohibited.

5.) Rushing the Quarterback

- The referee will count to three once the ball has been snapped, at which point any number of players may rush the quarterback.
- Once the ball is handed off, pitched, or thrown, the three-second rule no longer applies and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- The referee will mark the line of scrimmage after each play.

6.) Equipment

- Game balls will be provided by the EPRD, with the following distinctions:
 - 5/6 Year Old Division: Size 2
 - 7/8 & 9/10 Year Old Divisions: Size 3
 - 11/12 Year Old Division: Size 4
- The EPRD will provide the flag belts that will be used in the YFFL. Flag belts must have three flags hanging from the belt to be considered legal.
- Only rubber cleats are permitted for use in the YFFL.
- Jerseys will be provided to each player and need to be tucked into the pants/shorts. No half-length or half jerseys allowed.
- All players are strongly encouraged to wear a mouthpiece.

7.) Offensive Penalties

- Illegal Motion – 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and replay first down.
- False Start – 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and replay first down.
- Delay of Game – 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and replay first down. The clock will be automatically stopped until the next legal snap.
- Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down.
- Pass Interference – 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down.
- *Flag Guarding – 10 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.
- *Illegal Contact – 10 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.

*The next play begins after the penalty has been marked off. If the runner has passed the first down marker, but the penalty brings the ball back before the first down marker, then no first down has occurred.

8.) Defensive Penalties

- Offsides – 5 yards from the line of scrimmage, replay down
- Defensive Holding (non-ball carrier) – 10 yards from line of scrimmage, replay the down.
- Defensive Holding (ball carrier) – 10 yards from the spot of the foul and automatic 1st down.
- Pass Interference – 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic 1st down.
- Illegal Contact – 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic 1st down.
- Illegal Flag Pull – 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and an automatic 1st down. If the offense scored a touchdown on the play, then offense is given the option of accepting the yardage or the score.

9.) Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalties

- Any unsportsmanlike conduct (i.e. tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, taunting or similar infractions) will not be tolerated. The referee will stop the game, eject the offending player(s) from the game, administer a 10-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage, with an automatic 1st down if it was on the defense or a loss of down if it was on the offense.

*Miscellaneous

- The referee is in charge at the field. He/she will determine incidental contact that may occur in the natural flow of the game.
- Only the coach may ask the referee questions about rules and their interpretations.
- Judgment calls cannot be disputed.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty.

Definitions

Delay of Game: Failure to snap the ball within the 30-second time limit after the referee has set the ball.

False Start: Any flinch by an offensive player after the offense has been set.

Offsides: The defensive act of being across the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.

Holding: The act of grabbing a player or his jersey that prevents him/her from moving freely.

Illegal Motion: More than one person moving at the same time after the offense has been set.

Illegal Forward Pass: Any pass where the passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage.

Illegal Flag Pull: Intentionally pulling the flag from an offensive player without the ball.

Illegal Contact: Any contact made to an opponent that serves to be dangerous to the players involved or impedes a player's progress (i.e. blocking, holding, kicking, punching, tripping, tackling, etc.).

Offensive Pass Interference: Any contact made by the offense that creates an advantage for the receiving team (i.e. pushing off, screening the defender on passing plays, etc.).

Defensive Pass Interference: Any contact made with the receiver that inhibits a potential reception, and/or creates an advantage for the defender.

Flag Guarding: Any use of the arms, hands, or ball to deny the defense the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt.

FLAG FOOTBALL MECHANICS

2 Officials

Referee

1. Position yourself in the offensive backfield, close to the out of bounds line.
2. Watch for encroachment and stop play at once.
3. Begin the three-second count once the ball has been snapped.
4. Watch for illegal procedure, blocks, defensive charging and roughness of play.
5. Make sure passes are thrown from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Cover all plays on your side.
7. Keep play boxed in and trail all plays watching for penalties.
8. Mark off all penalties.
9. Spot the ball on every play giving the down, line to gain, and signal ready to play.

Umpire

1. Position yourself on the defensive backfield on the side or out of bounds.
2. Cover all plays on your side
3. Cover all pass plays -- call pass interference.
4. Move farther down field on long passes.
5. Stay off the field as much as possible until you blow the play dead, then move in and mark ball.
6. Watch for illegal blocks and roughness in line play.

All Officials:

- * **Hustle** to get into position then stand stationary when play occurs.
- * Spot the ball when it is dead.
- * Throw the flag in the air and at the spot of the penalty not at the player.
- * **STOP ROUGH PLAY**
- * Keep the game moving
- * Communicate with your fellow officials and with the team