

G e o r g e M a s o n U n i v e r s i t y

# 4v4 Flag Football - Rules

Each player must present a valid Mason G Card before each contest to be eligible to participate.

**No ID...No Play...No Exceptions!**

## **Game time is forfeit time.**

Officials who are in absolute control of the game will do the officiating. Teams are responsible for keeping their spectators under control. Misconduct of spectators, players or coaches can result in assessment of a penalty, ejection or forfeiture of the game. Spectators must also remain in the area designated by the officials. Only players and coaches (maximum of two) are permitted in the playing area. The official shall have the power to make decisions on any matters or questions not specifically covered in the rules.

## **I. The Game, Field, Players, and Equipment**

### **1.1 General Provisions**

**1.1.1. The Game** (1-1-1) The game shall be played between two teams of four players each.

Three players are required to start the game and avoid a default; three players to avoid a forfeit (injuries).

**1.1.2. Eligibility** (1-1-4) All players must have checked in with the supervisor and be recorded on the game sheet before they are allowed to participate.

**1.1.3. Persons Subject to the Rules** (1-1-5) Team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, spectators and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

**1.1.4. Referee's Authority** (1-1-6) The Referee has 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 the game.

### **1.2 The Field**

**1.2.1. Field Layout** (1-2-1) The field dimensions are 40 yards by 20 yards with 10-yard end zones. The playing field is divided into two 20-yard zones. Both 3 yd. lines shall be marked with an "X" on the hash mark.

**1.2.2. Inbounds/Out-of-Bounds** (1-2-4) The lines bounding the sidelines and the end zones are out-of-bounds.

**1.2.3. Team Box and Spectator Area** (1-2-5) Each team box is a designated area for players. Each box is marked between the Goal line and opposite goal line and one yard from the sideline. Players must stay within this team box. All spectators **MUST** remain behind the fenced area from Goal line and opposite goal line.

### 1.3 Game Equipment

**1.3.1. The Ball (1-3-1)** Each team must provide their own football. The official ball shall be pebble-grained leather or rubber covered and meets the recommendations of size and shape for regulation football. There are no requirements regarding ball pressure and markings. Men shall use the regular size while women shall use the men's, intermediate, youth, or junior size. The referee shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball during play at his/her discretion. During the game each team must use a legal ball of its choice when in possession.

### 1.4 Player Equipment-Required

**1.4.1. Jersey (1-4-1)** Jerseys may not have pockets, holes, or a button placket. All team members must wear the same shade of color shirt. Jerseys must be either:

- A. Long enough so they remain tucked in the pants/shorts the entire down, or
- B. Short enough so there is a minimum of 4" from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline.

**1.4.2. Pants/Shorts (1-4-2)** Each player must wear pants or shorts without any belt(s), belt loop(s), pocket(s), holes, or exposed drawstrings. Pants or shorts must be a different color than the flags. Pants or shorts may not be turned inside out, and pockets may not be taped.

**1.4.3. Flag Belt (1-4-3)** The Referee must know that a player was not wearing a flag belt during the down in order to penalize a team.

**1.4.4. Shoes (1-4-4)** All players must wear shoes made of canvas, leather or synthetic material, which cover the entire foot.

### 1.5 Player Equipment-Optional

#### 1.5.1. Headwear (1-5-3)

- A. Players may wear a knit stocking cap. The cap must have no bill.
- B. Players may wear a single-colored headband no wider than 2"

**1.5.2. Sunglasses (1-5-6)** Players may wear pliable and non-rigid sunglasses.

**1.5.3. Play Book (1-5-6)** Players may carry a Play Book inside their clothing as long as it is not made of unyielding material.

### 1.6 Player Equipment-Illegal

**1.6.1. Illegal Equipment (1-6-1)** A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be allowed to play. Types of equipment that shall be declared illegal include:

- A. Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material, including billed hats, or items containing exposed knots, such as bandanas.
- B. Jewelry and rubber bands of any kind.
- C. Pads or braces worn above the waist.
- D. Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in, or detachable cleats unless the screw is part of the cleat.
- E. Jerseys that have been altered in any manner which produces a knot-like protrusion.
- F. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges.

**G.** Towels may not hang from a participant's waist. Each team must provide their own football. The official ball shall be pebble-grained leather or rubber covered and meets the recommendations of size and shape for regulation football. There are no requirements regarding ball pressure and markings. Men shall use the regular size while women shall use the men's, intermediate, youth, or junior size. The referee shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball during play at his/her discretion. During the game each team must use a legal ball of its choice when in possession.

## **II. Periods, Time Factors, Substitutions**

### **2.1 Start of Each Half**

**2.1.1. Coin Toss (3-1-1)** The captain winning the toss shall have the choice of options for the first half or shall defer his/her option to the second half. The options are: A. To choose whether his/her team will start on offense or defense. B. To choose the goal his/her team will defend. The captain not having the first choice of options for a half shall exercise the remaining option.

### **2.2 Game Time**

**2.2.1. Playing Time and Intermissions (3-2-1)** Playing time shall be 40 minutes, divided into two halves of 20 minutes each. The clock will run continuously for the entire first half and 18 minutes of play of the second half unless stopped for charged time out, officials' time out, or injury. Half-time will be three minutes.

**2.2.2. Play (3-2-2)** Play at the beginning of each half will start at the offense's 3 yard line.

**2.2.3. Extension of Periods (3-2-3)** A half must be extended by an untimed down, except for unsportsmanlike or non-player or fouls which specify a loss of down, if during the last timed down, one of the following occurred:

- A.** There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted.
- B.** There was a double foul.
- C.** If a touchdown was scored, the Try is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the second half and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game. If (A), (B), or (C) occurs during the untimed down, the period will be extended by the same rule.

**2.2.4. During last 2 minutes of second half the clock will stop for a(n):**

- A.** Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass-starts on the snap.
- B.** Out-of-bounds-starts on the snap.
- C.** Safety-starts on the snap.
- D.** Team time-out-starts on the snap.
- E.** First down-depends on previous play.
- F.** Touchdown-starts on next offensive snap (Point Tries are untimed)
- G.** Penalty and administration-dependent on the previous play (except delay of game-starts on snap)
- H.** Referee's time out-starts at his/her discretion.
- I.** Touchback-starts on the snap.

J. Team attempting to conserve time illegally-starts on whistle.

K. Team attempting to consume time illegally-starts on snap.

### **2.3 Tie Game**

**2.3.1. Overtime (3-3-1)** During the regular season, there will be no overtime period. During playoffs, overtime will continue until a winner is determined.

**2.3.2. The Coin Toss (3-3-2)** There will be only one coin flip during the overtime. *ALL OVERTIME PERIODS ARE PLAYED TOWARD THE SAME GOAL LINE.* The end zone used is at the discretion of the Intramural Staff and game officials.

**2.3.3. Tie Breaker (3-3-3)** Unless moved by penalty, each team will start first down and goal from the 20-yard line (midfield mark). The team will have three downs to score, unless awarded first down automatically, or a penalty allows for repeating the down. If the defense intercepts a pass or fumble and returns it for a touchdown, they win the game. If they do not return the interception for a touchdown, the series is over. Each team is entitled to one time-out per overtime period.

**2.3.4. Overtime-Fouls and Penalties (3-3-4)** The goal shall always be the zone line-to-gain in overtime.

### **2.4 Time Outs**

**2.4.1. Charged Time-outs (3-4-3)** Each team is entitled to two charged time-outs per game.

**2.4.2. Length of Time-outs (3-4-4)** A charged time-out requested by any player which is legally granted shall be one minute and can be shortened if both teams are ready.

**2.4.3. Injured Player (3-4-8)** An injured or apparently injured player, who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs. A player who is bleeding, or has an open wound, or has blood on their uniform shall be considered injured.

### **2.5 Delays**

**2.5.1. Delay of Game (3-5-1)** The ball must be put in play promptly and legally and any action or inaction by either team, which tends to prevent this, is delay of game. This includes:

A. Failure to snap within 25 seconds after the ball is whistled ready for play.

B. Putting the ball in play before it is whistled ready for play.

**2.5.2. Illegally Conserving or Consuming Time (3-5-2)** The Referee may order the game clock started or stopped whenever, in his/her opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume time.

### **2.6 Substitutions**

**2.6.1. Eligible Substitutions (3-6-1)** No substitute shall enter during a down. An incoming substitute must enter the field directly from the team area. A replaced player must leave the field at the sideline nearest his/her team area prior to the ball being snapped.

**2.6.2. Legal Substitutions (3-6-2)** No substitute shall become a player and then withdraw, and no player shall withdraw and then re-enter as a substitute unless a penalty is accepted or there is a charged time-out.

### **III. Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out-of-Bounds**

#### **3.1 Ball in Play-Dead Ball**

**3.1.1. Ball Declared Dead (4-1-2)** A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound the whistle or declare it dead when:

- A.** When it goes out-of-bounds,
- B.** When any part of the runner other than a hand or foot touches the ground.
- C.** When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or successful Try is made.
- D.** When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players
- E.** When the ball strikes the ground after being first touched by the kicking team
- F.** When a backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players. A ball snapped, which hits the ground before or after getting to the intended player is dead at the spot where it hit the ground.
- G.** When a runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player. A flag belt is removed when the clip is detached by another player from the belt
- H.** When a runner is legally tagged with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm when the flag belt inadvertently becomes detached.

#### **3.2 Inadvertent Whistle**

**3.2.1. Inadvertent Whistle-Clock (4-2-1)** There is no time added to the clock during a down with an inadvertent whistle.

### **IV. Series of Downs, Number of Down, and Team Possession**

#### **4.1 Series**

**4.1.1. Zone Line-to-Gain (5-1-3)** Each team has 3 plays to cross the midfield zone line-to-gain yardage and then 3 plays to score a touchdown.

**4.1.2. Awarding a new series (5-1-4)** A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty; or a penalty against the defense moves the ball into the next zone; or an accepted penalty against the defense involves an automatic first down; or either team has obtained legal possession of a ball as a result of a penalty, touchback, pass interception, or turnover on downs.

**4.1.3 Change of Possessions** All drives and changes of possessions (except interceptions) start at the 3-yard line. Possessions starting as a result of an interception begin at the point of the interception. Safety results in 2 points and possession.

#### **4.2 Down and Possession After a Penalty**

**4.2.1. Penalty Resulting in a First Down (5-2-1)** After a penalty which leaves the ball in possession of a team beyond its zone line-to-gain, or when a penalty stipulates a first down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with the next line-to-gain.

**4.2.2. Foul Before Change of Possession (5-2-2)** The down shall be repeated unless the penalty also involves a loss of down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the line-to-gain. If the penalty involves a loss of down, the down shall count as one of the four in that series.

**4.2.3. Rule Decisions Final (5-2-5)** No rule decision (interpretation) may be changed or protested after the ball is next legally snapped.

## **V. Kicking the Ball**

**5.1 There is NO kicking or punting in 4-on-4 flag football**

## **VI. Snapping, Handing, and Passing the Ball**

### **6.1 The Scrimmage**

**6.1.1. The Start (7-1-1)** All plays must be started by a legal snap from a point on or between hash marks.

**6.1.2 Ball Responsibility (7-1-2)** The offensive team is responsible for retrieving the ball after a down.

### **6.2 Prior to the snap**

**6.2.1. Encroachment (7-2-1)** Following the ready for play whistle, and until the snap, no player on defense may encroach, touch the ball, nor make contact opponents or in any other way interfere with them (verbally or otherwise). This includes standing in or shifting through the neutral zone.

**6.2.2 False Start (7-2-2)** No offense player shall make a false start or simulate the start of a play. An infraction of this rule may be penalized whether or not the ball is snapped and the penalty for any resultant encroachment shall be cancelled.

**6.2.3. Snap (7-2-3)** The snapper, after assuming position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of play until the snap. When over the ball, the snapper shall have his/her feet behind the scrimmage line. The snapper shall pass the ball backwards from its position on the ground with a continuous motion.

### **6.3 Position and Action During the Snap**

**6.3.1. Legal Position (7-3-1)** Anytime on or after the ball is marked ready for play, each offensive player must be within 8 yards of the ball before the snap (i.e., they must come inside the hash marks)

**6.3.2. Minimum Line Players (7-3-2)** The offensive team must have at least one player on or within one yard of their scrimmage line.

**6.3.3. Motion (7-3-3)** One offensive player may be in motion, but not toward the opponent's goal line at the snap. Other offensive players must be stationary in their positions without movement of the feet, body, head, or arms.

**6.3.4. No Direct Snap (7-3-4)** The player receiving the snap must be at least two yards from the offensive line of scrimmage.

**6.3.5. Shift (7-3-5)** If two or more players go in motion prior to the snap, ALL players MUST come to a stop for at least 1 second prior to the snap.

### **6.4 Handing the Ball**

**6.4.1. Anytime (7-4-1)** Any player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time.

## **6.5 Backward Pass and Fumble**

**6.5.1. Ball Dead when It Hits the Ground (7-6-5)** A fumble, which touches the ground between the goal lines, is dead at the spot where it touches the ground or crosses the sideline.

## **6.6 Legal and Illegal Forward Pass**

**6.6.1. Legal Forward Pass (7-7-1)** All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. During a down and before a change of possession a forward pass may be thrown provided the passer's feet are behind the offensive line of scrimmage when the ball leaves the passer's hand. Only one forward pass is allowed per down. A play involving a run across the line of scrimmage and then back behind the line of scrimmage where a forward pass is thrown is a legal play.

**6.6.2. Illegal Forward Pass (7-7-2)** A forward pass is illegal if:

- A. If the passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball is released.
- B. If intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to save loss of yardage
- C. If a passer catches his/her untouched forward or backward pass
- D. If there is more than one forward pass per down

## **6.7 Completed or Intercepted Passes**

**6.7.1. Simultaneous Catch by Opposing Players (7-8-2)** If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by member of opposing teams, the ball becomes dead at the spot of the catch and belongs to the offensive team.

## **6.8 Forward Pass Interference**

**6.8.1. Contact (7-10-1)** During a down in which a legal forward pass crosses the offensive line of scrimmage, contact or action that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage is pass interference. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged prior to touching the ball.

## **6.9 Rushing the Quarterback**

**6.9.1** Defensive players must wait 3 seconds until they can cross the line of scrimmage and attempt to rush the quarterback. Head Referee will give a "clear" signal.

# **VII. Scoring Plays and Touchback**

## **7.1 Mercy Rule**

**7.1.1. Two Minute Warning** If a team is 25 or more points ahead when the Referee announces the two-minute warning for the second half, the game shall be over

**7.1.2. After the Two Minute Warning** If a team scores during the last two minutes of the second half causing a score difference of 25 or more points, the game shall be over.

**7.1.3. Half time mercy rule** - The game will end at halftime or any point thereafter if one team reaches a lead of 40+ points.

## **7.2 Touchdown**

**7.2.1. Player Responsibility (8-3-3)** The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can de-flag the player. If the player is not de-flagged with one pull to the left

or right and the official determines the belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is nullified and the player is ejected.

### **7.3 Point(s) after Touchdown Tries**

**7.3.1. One or Two points (8-4-1)** An opportunity to score one point from the 5 yard line or two points from the 10 yard line by passing shall be granted to the team scoring a touchdown. Note: If a touchdown is scored on the last timed down of the second half, the Try is not attempted, unless it will affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.

**7.3.2. Decision (8-4-2)** Once the scoring captain makes the choice, the decision may only be changed when either team takes a charged time-out. A penalty does not allow for a change in point value, nor does awarded or lost yardage affect the point value. If the defense intercepts a pass on a Try and returns the ball for a touchdown, they receive two points.

**7.3.3. Penalties During a Try (8-4-3)** If a double foul occurs, the Try will be replayed. If the offensive team is penalized on a successful try, the down will be repeated if the penalty is accepted. If the offensive team incurs a loss of down penalty, the Try will not be repeated.

**7.3.4. Subsequent Series (8-4-4)** After the Try, the new offensive team shall snap the ball from their own 3-yard line unless moved by a penalty.

### **7.4 Momentum, Safety, and Touchback**

#### **7.4.1. Safety = 2 points (8-6-1) A safety occurs when:**

- A.** A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line and the ball becomes dead
- B.** A player, passes, fumbles, snaps, muffs, or bats a loose ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line and the ball becomes dead behind their goal line
- C.** A player on offense commits any penalty for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from a spot in his/her end zone; or throws an illegal forward pass from within his/her end zone, or any situation which leaves the offense in possession of the ball in their own end zone.
- D.** After a safety, the scoring team shall snap the ball at their own 3-yard line, unless moved by a penalty.

#### **7.4.2. Touchback (8-6-2) A touchback occurs when:**

- A.** The ball is out-of-bounds behind a goal line (except from an incomplete forward pass)
- B.** After a touchback, the ball shall be snapped from the nearest 3-yard line, unless moved by a penalty.

## **VIII. Conduct of Players and Spectators**

### **8.1 Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

#### **8.1.1. Noncontact Player Acts (9-1-1)** No player shall commit acts including:

- A.** Using words similar to the offensive's audible or quarterback cadence prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with the offense
- B.** Intentionally kicking the ball, other than a punt
- C.** Participating while wearing illegal player equipment

D. Fighting or attempting to fight (results in disqualification)

**8.1.2. Dead Ball Fouls** (9-1-2) When the ball is dead, no player shall:

A. Intentionally kick the ball

B. Spike the ball

**8.1.3. Prohibited Acts** (9-1-3) There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, coaches, or others subject to the rules. Examples include, but are not limited to:

A. Attempting to influence a decision by an official

B. Disrespectfully addressing an official

C. Using profanity, taunting, insulting or vulgar language or gestures

D. Intentionally making contact with a game official during the game

E. Fighting

F. Leaving the team area and entering the playing field during a fight

**8.1.4 Second Unsportsmanlike Conduct Foul** (9-1-4) The second unsportsmanlike conduct foul by the same player results in disqualification. If a spectator receives the penalty, it will be assessed to the captain.

## **8.2 Personal Fouls**

**8.2.1. Player Restrictions** (9-3-1) No player shall:

A. Strip or attempt to strip the ball from a player in possession by punching, striking, or stealing.

B. Contact an opponent who is on the ground

C. Throw a runner to the ground

D. Hurdle any other player

E. Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is dead

F. Make contact of any nature which is deemed unnecessary

G. Deliberately dive or run into a defensive player

H. Tackle the runner by grasping or encircling with the hands or arms.

**8.2.2. Roughing the Passer** (9-3-2) Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown forward legally. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as he/she is considered out of the play after the pass. NOTE: The passer remains the passer while the ball is in flight or until they move to participate in the play. Defensive players may not make contact with the passer's arm, including the ball.

## **8.3 Screen Blocking**

**8.3.1. Offensive Screen Blocking** (9-4-1) The offensive screen block shall take place without contact. The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind the back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker must be on his/her feet before, during, and after the screen.

**8.3.2. Screen Blocking Fundamentals** (9-4-2) A player who screens shall not:

A. Make contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.

- B. Take a position close to a moving opponent such that the opponent cannot avoid contact.
- C. After assuming the legal screening position, move unless the blocker moves in the same direction as the opponent.

#### **8.4. Runner**

**8.4.1. Flag Guarding (9-5-1)** Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. Examples of flag guarding include, but are not limited to:

- A. Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt
- B. Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt
- C. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt

**8.4.2. Obstructing the Runner (9-5-4)** The defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt.

**8.4.3. Charging (9-5-5)** A runner shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in their path. If a runner in progress has established a straight path, he/she may not be crowded out of that path, but if a defensive player legally established position, the runner must avoid contact by changing direction.

**8.4.4 Quarterback** Quarterbacks may not run the ball, but may scramble. They may not cross the line of scrimmage without throwing the ball. However they may hand the football off to a teammate who may cross the line of scrimmage. By doing this however, it eliminates the 3 second rush count.

### **IX. Summary of Co-ed Rules**

**9.1.** The co-rec game shall be played between 2 teams of 4 players, 2 men and 2 women. Teams with 3 players shall be 2 men and 1 women or 2 women and 1 men. 3 players are required to start the game and avoid a forfeit.

**9.2. The Ball:** A regular, intermediate, youth, or junior size ball may be used.

**9.3. Minimum Line Players** The offensive team must have at least one player on their line of scrimmage at the snap.

#### **9.4 Illegal Forward Pass**

**9.4.1.** If an official erroneously indicates the "open/closed" status of a down, the play is nullified and the down will be repeated.

**9.4.2. Male to Male Completion** - During the offensive team's possession there may not be two consecutive legal forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. This rule applies to the Point After Touchdown Try. If a male passer completes a legal forward pass to a male receiver, the next legal forward pass must involve a female passer or female receiver for positive yardage. Any penalty, whether accepted or declined shall have no effect on whether the next forward pass completion is "open" or "closed."

## **9.6 Mercy Rule**

**9.6.1.** If a team is ahead by 40 points or more at the two minute warning, the game is complete.

**9.6.2** If a team becomes ahead by 40 or more points within the last two minutes of the second half, the game is complete.

**9.7. Touchdown Value:** A touchdown involving a female receiver/runner crossing the goal line or throwing a legal forward pass is worth 9 points.