

Bucknell University Recreation Services Intramural Flag Football Rules



NOTE: Rules are derived from the 2005-2006 NIRSA Flag Football Rulebook, with exceptions made by the Office of Recreation Services to fit our programming needs.

Pre-Game

- Each participant is responsible for checking in with the Court Supervisor. All participants must bring their current Bucknell University ID to each game. Participants without proper identification will not be allowed to play.
- Intramural regulations and policies concerning eligibility are in effect.
- No jewelry is permitted during play. This includes rubber bands/bracelets on wrist, earrings, piercings, etc...
- No hard-billed caps or tied bandanas with exposed knots.
- Bucknell University does not accept liability for any injury occurring before, during, or after play. Accident coverage information can be obtained from Student Health Services.
- All injuries must be reported to the supervisor on duty.

Equipment, Field, and Players,

Equipment

- Shirts must be long enough to tuck in so that they remain tucked in the pants/shorts during the entire down or short enough so there is a minimum 4" from the bottom of the shirt to the player's waistline (4" is about equal to a fist's width).
- NEW RULE AS OF 2005-2006 NIRSA FLAG FOOTBALL RULE BOOK: Rips under the armpits of the shirt may only be 4" from top to bottom (4" is equal to about a fist's width)
- Pants or shorts with BELT LOOPS, POCKETS, EXPOSED DRAWSTRINGS, or EXPOSED KNOTS are prohibited. This includes pockets that Velcro or zipper. Players may NOT tape pockets or loops. Tear-away pants are also prohibited.
- Baseball hats and visors are prohibited. Bandanas with hard-knots tied in them are prohibited. Toboggans and headbands are legal for wear.
- Towels may not hang from a player's waist or otherwise interfere with the possible removal of a flag. Towels however may be used and kept on the ground or on the ball before the snap.

- All jewelry must be removed including watches, earrings, bracelets, etc. Players may wear soft, pliable basketball or wrestling knee pads on legs, knees and/or ankles.
- Shoes must be worn; Football/soccer cleats are permitted. Shoes with metal, ceramic, sharp points or detachable cleats are prohibited. Shoes with detachable, screw-in cleats are permitted as long as the screw is part of the cleat, and not the shoe.
 - **NOTE:** Failure to comply with clothing requirements can result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty. (Penalty: 10 yards from succeeding spot.
- No casts are allowed. No pads or braces are allowed above the waist.
- A standard size leather or rubber football may be used. Game balls will be provided, but teams may choose to use their own footballs. Referees will not handle the football exchange. The offense is responsible for the ball at all times.

Field

- The field is divided into 4 zones of 20 yards each and 2 end zones of 10 yards each.

Players

- The game shall be played between two teams of 7 players each on a rectangular field. Each team must have 5 players on the field in order to begin the game. CO-REC: Co-rec teams shall play 8 players on the field, with a minimum of 6 to start the game. Co-rec teams must have 4 girls and 4 guys to play 8. If a co-rec team plays man down, they may have 4:3 favoring either gender. A co-rec team with 6 players must have 3:3 or 4:2 with both genders.
- Each team shall designate a captain to act as team spokesperson and make decisions. Only the captain may talk to officials. Team representatives including players, spectators, team managers, coaches, and group members are subject to the rules.

Periods, Time, and Substitutions

Pre-Game

- The winner of the pre-game toss shall have the first choice of options:
 - offense/defense,
 - which goal to defend,
 - or to defer their choice of A or B until the second half.

Game Length and Time Outs

- A game shall consist of two 20-minute halves with a 5-minute half time. The clock will run continuously during the first half. During the last 2 minutes of the second half, the clock will stop such as in college football, for the following infractions:
 - Penalties
 - Scoring plays
 - Incomplete passes/out of bounds
 - Injured players
 - First downs (until the ball is set in play by referee's ready to play whistle).
- Mercy Rule: If a team is ahead by 19 points at the two-minute warning (25 in Co-Rec) in the second half, the game is over.

- Each team is allowed two (2) timeouts per half (1-minute time-outs); time-outs not used in the first half are not carried over into the second half. The clock will stop during time-outs.
- A half may be extended by an “un-timed” down when, during the last timed down and dead ball interval there is a double foul, an accepted live or dead ball foul, or an inadvertent whistle and the down is to be replayed.
 - New Rule for 2005-2006: Any fouls committed at the end of a half that involve a loss of down penalty can end the half.

Overtime (playoffs only)

- Ties in the playoffs will be broken by the "Texas Tie Breaker"
 - Play will begin on the 10-yard line and teams will have 4 plays each.
 - A coin toss will precede "Tie Breaker". The team winning the toss has 3 options: Offense/Defense, or Direction. The opposing team then has the remaining choice.
 - The object is to score a touchdown and subsequent extra point (1, 2, or 3 points). After team A scores, team B then has 4 plays within which to score. If no team has scored after their respective plays the process is repeated.
 - When a pass is intercepted the defense becomes the offense and begins their series of 4 plays. If the interception is returned for a touchdown, the game is over.
 - Penalties are assessed similar to the regular game. A team shall be given a new series of 4 plays when an automatic first down penalty is accepted. Dead ball penalties after a touchdown are penalized on the extra point attempt. Live ball penalties committed by either team after team B gains possession during an attempt or overtime shall be enforced at the succeeding spot. Dead ball penalties following a successful attempt will be penalized from the succeeding spot, the team B 10-yard line, if accepted.

Substitution

- All eligible players must appear on the gametime score sheet and have presented their Bucknell ID to the sports supervisors.
- Players may substitute freely between downs. Co-rec substitutions are man-for-man and women-for-women only.

Definition of Playing Terms

- Removal of flag belt: Removal of the flag belt occurs when a defensive player clearly pulls, or creates a legal action in which the flag belt becomes unclasped during a live ball play. Players may not dive to remove a flag belt.
- The position of the ball when a player is deflagged determines the spot of the next line of scrimmage.
- A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock down the ball carrier in an attempt to remove the flag, nor shall an offensive player hold, block, or run through a defensive player trying to remove the flag belt. (*Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards*)
- When a runner loses his/her flag belt either accidentally or inadvertently (i.e. not caused by a defensive pull), play continues. The deflagging reverts to a one-hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and knees, including the arms and hands.

- Removing a flag belt from a player before they receive a pass is considered a penalty. During this situation, the play is still live, and the ball carrier reverts to one-hand tag. (*Penalty: Pass Interference, 10 yards & Automatic First Down*)
- Scrimmage line: The scrimmage line for team A is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes through the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. The scrimmage line for team B is the yard line and its vertical plane, which passes one yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. A colored Bean Bag will signify each.

Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out-Of-Bounds

Ball in Play

- The starting spot for the beginnings of each half, series after touchdown, and touchback shall be the 14-yard line.
- The offense must snap the ball within 25 seconds after the Referee has sounded the ready-for-play whistle. (*Penalty: Delay of Game, 5 yards*)
- If the offense delays under 2 minutes to go in the game, the first infraction shall be a loss of a down. A second delay of game infraction will carry a loss of possession.
- If the defense commits a dead ball penalty with less than 2 minutes to go in the game, the first infraction shall be a 5-yard penalty. If the defense commits a second consecutive dead ball penalty, then the offense will have a choice of the ball on the defense 3-yard line, or the yardage from the penalty.
- The ball is declared dead when:
 - A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players (simultaneous catch awarded to offense)
 - A backwards pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground.
 - A runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player.
 - A runner is legally touched with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hands and arms, once the flag belt inadvertently falls off of a runner.
 - A muff of a protected scrimmage kick strikes the ground.
 - The passer is deflagged before releasing the ball.

Fumbles

- A fumble or backward pass is dead at the point it hits the ground. The ball goes to the team that last had possession. Just touching the ball is not sufficient for legal possession.

Out of Bounds

- A ball in player-possession is considered out-of-bounds when either the ball or any part of the runner touches the ground or anything else (except a player or game official) which is on or outside the boundary line. If the runner inbounds bumps into or touches another player or official on the sidelines out-of-bounds, the ball is still in play.
- The sideline and end lines are considered out of bounds. Only one foot is needed inbounds when a receiver catches the ball to be considered a catch.
- Once an offensive or defensive player steps out of bounds, that player is no longer eligible to participate in the play. (*Penalty: Illegal Participation, 10 yards*)

Series of Downs, Number of Downs

- The zone line-to-gain in any series shall be the zone (next field marker) in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty of failure to gain. In such case, the original zone (next field marker) in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line-to-gain. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines shall be the determining factor.

Kicking the Ball

- The kick must be executed behind the line of scrimmage within a reasonable time. (*Penalty: Delay of Game, 5 yards*)
- Neither team may cross the line of scrimmage unless the ball has been punted.
- There are no quick kicks. All punts must be announced to the Referee. (*Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards*)
- The defensive team may not build a pyramid or support each other in any manner in order to block or attempt to block a kick. (*Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards*)
- The receiving team may advance kicked into the end zone.
- The ball is dead if it strikes the ground before the receiving team obtains the ball.
- The ball shall be declared dead if a member of the kicking team first touches the kicked ball. The receiving team will retain possession of the ball.
- There are NO FAIR CATCHES.

Snapping, Handling, and Passing the Ball

The Scrimmage

- The ball may be snapped between the legs or to the side of the snapper.
- The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line. Direct snaps are always illegal (under center). (*Penalty: Illegal Snap, 5 yards*)
- The offensive team must have a minimum of four players on the line of scrimmage. In Co-rec, the minimum is 5 players. (*Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards*)
- No offensive player shall make a false start. A false start is any movement simulating a snap. (*Penalty: False Start, 5 yards*)
- After the snapper has touched the ball, it is encroachment for any player to break the plane of his/her scrimmage line, except the snapper's right to be over the ball. (*Penalty: Encroachment, 5 yards first offense, 10 yards for each consecutive offense*)
- All players must be motionless for one second preceding the snap, except for a player moving parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage. (*Penalty: Illegal Motion, 5 yards*)
- If more than one offensive player goes in motion, then all players in motion must be set for one second prior to the snap. (*Penalty: Illegal Shift, 5 yards*)
- All players (Center/Snapper) are eligible for a forward pass. The passer may pass from anywhere behind the line of scrimmage.

Handing the Ball

- Any player may hand the ball backward at any time.

- During a free kick down, no player may hand the ball forward to a teammate.
- CO-REC ONLY:
 - A male runner cannot advance the ball through the scrimmage line (i.e. No dives, sweeps or options for male runners)
(*Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.*)
 - Teams cannot have run plays for male players
 - **Note: There are no restrictions:**
 - During a pass to a male runner.
 - During a run by a female runner.
 - After a change of team possession.

Forward Pass

- All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. Only one forward pass per down.
- **A forward pass is illegal:**
 - If the passer's foot is beyond Team A's scrimmage line (offensive bean bag spotter) when the ball leaves his/her hand
 - If thrown after team possession has changed during the down
 - If intentionally grounded to save loss of yardage
 - If a passer catches his/her untouched forward or backward pass.
 - Second forward pass in that down

(*Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards, spot of the pass, loss of down, if prior to possession change*)

- After the ball is snapped, and until it has been touched, there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond the offensive scrimmage line when the legal forward pass crosses the offensive scrimmage line (offensive bean bag spotter).
 - Co-rec: If officials erroneously indicate open/closed play, Team A can either replay or take result of the play.

(*Penalty: Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot and loss of down*)

- After a legal forward pass is released by the passer and until it is touched, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond Team A's scrimmage line while the ball is in flight which crosses the Team A scrimmage line.

(*Penalty: Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot and an automatic first down.*)

- If opposing players catch a pass simultaneously the ball becomes dead, is considered a completed pass, and belongs to the offensive team.
- **CO-REC ONLY:** If a male passer completes a legal forward pass to a male receiver, the next legal forward pass completion must involve either a female passer or a female receiver for positive yards. Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completion is "open" or "closed".
 - "Open" = males are eligible to catch a pass.
 - "Closed" = males are ineligible to catch a pass. This rule applies to the try.

Line Blocking – New for Bucknell, as of 2005 season

- Offensive blockers may NOT contact defensive players. The screen blockers shall place his/her hands and his/her arms to the side of or behind the body.
- Use of hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. (*Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards*)
- A player who screens shall not:

- Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
- Make contact when assuming a position at the side
- Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction
- After assuming his/her legal screening position move to maintain it, unless he/she moves in the same direction as his/her opponent.
- Defensive rushers must go around screen blockers. Defensive rushers may NOT use hands and arms to move around screen blockers. The application of this rule is at the discretion of the supervisor officiating. (*Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards*)
- Screeners cannot interlock arms to create screens or encircle a defender or runner.

Scoring Plays and Touchback

- Forfeit game - 1 point.
- Touchdown - 6 points (Co-Rec: Women scores or throws for a Touchdown - 9 points)
- Safety - 2 points
- Try: Ball in play from the 3-yard line - 1 point; Ball in play from the 10-yard line - 2 points; Ball in play from the 20 yard - 3 points.
 - Try: A defensive player may intercept a pass or fumble and run it back for what would normally be a touchdown and score 6 points.
 - Try: If, after an interception on try by defense, the defense commits a foul in the end zone or willingly leaves and returns into the end zone and is deflagged, the offense is awarded a 2-point safety.

Mercy Rule

- If a team is 19 or more points (Co-rec: 25 points) ahead with two minutes to play, the game shall be over.
- If a team scores during the last 2 minutes of the game and the score creates a 19 or more point difference (Co-rec 25 points) the game shall end at that point.

Conduct of Players

Contact During Game

- There shall be no personal fouls committed by players, substitutes and coaches. **Personal Fouls include:**
 - Using fist, foot, knee, or leg to contact an opponent
 - Tackling the ball carrier (disqualification)
 - Illegal contact
 - Unnecessary roughness
 - Hurdling a player
 - Roughing the passer (when the defender contacts the passer's arm or body)
- Downfield offensive players may protect the runner by screening. Illegal contact between the offense/defense will be called against the player determined to have initiated the contact. (*Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards*) **NOTE: This is similar to Basketball. Players screening must give screened players time to react or move around the screen.**

- There shall be no bumping, checking, or other intentional contact between a defender and an offensive pass receiver. Both offense and defense are limited to screening an opponent. (*Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards*)
- Roughing the passer: Defensive players must make a definite effort to pull the thrower's flag during a rush, and not make with the thrower, including the throwing arm. (*Penalty: 10 yards and automatic first down, tack on the end of the play if positive yards have been gained. If not, 10 yards from the original spot and automatic first down.*)
- The ball carrier shall not guard their flags by blocking with arms, hands, ball or use of a stiff-arm block thereby denying an opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt. (*Penalty: Flag Guard, 10 yards*)
 - **NOTE: It is still considered a flag guard if the natural running motion of the arms denies the opponent of any legal pulls.**
- Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts. (*Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards from the previous spot, loss of down and player disqualification*)
- A player may not strike or strip the ball from the ball carrier at any time. (*Penalty: Illegal contact, 10 yards from spot of strike/strip*)
- Intentionally pulling or removing a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball by a defensive player is illegal. (*Penalty: Illegal Flag Belt Removal, 10 yards*)
- Defensive players may not hold, block, or obstruct the runner in any way prior to removal of the flag belt. (*Penalty: Holding, 10 yards*).
- Any attempt to tackle a player is not tolerated. (*Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 15 yards, automatic first down, and ejection of player*)
 - **NOTE: Further disciplinary action will follow from the Office of Recreation Services.**

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- If an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty is issued to a player, they must sit for two plays before they may re-enter the game.
- If a player obtains two unsportsmanlike conducts during a game, the player is ejected and must leave the site within 2 minutes, or risk team forfeiture. Ejected players will face disciplinary actions from the Office of Recreation Services.
- A player ejected from the game without a prior unsportsmanlike conduct penalty shall count as 2 unsportsmanlike conducts against the team.
- Four Unsportsmanlike penalties on any team during a single game will result in a Forfeit, immediate removal from the league, and further disciplinary actions from the Office of Recreation Services and the University Judicial Board.

Enforcement of Penalties

Basic Spot

- Pass play or during the protected scrimmage kick (before possession is gained) - basic enforcement spot is the previous spot (where ball was snapped).
- Punts (before possession is gained) basic enforcement spot is previous spot (where ball was kicked from)
- On all running plays the basic enforcement spot is from the end of the run.

- All fouls are marked off from the basic enforcement spot except an offensive foul behind the basic enforcement spot that becomes a spot foul.
- Live ball fouls committed by either team after B gains possession during a try or in OT shall be enforced at the succeeding spot.
- All Dead Ball fouls are administered separately and in the order of occurrence.

Forfeit/Default Procedures

FORFEITS:

- If a team forfeits (i.e. doesn't show up or doesn't have enough players) then they will not receive their \$20 deposit back at the end of the season.
- If a team forfeits twice then they will be dropped from the league.
- Games lost by forfeit will not be rescheduled.
- After two forfeits, or a default and a forfeit, or two defaults, a team will be ineligible for the playoffs. To be reinstated the team captain will need to set up an appointment with the Office of Recreation Services to discuss reasons why the team should be reinstated for league play. If the Office of Recreation Services finds these reasons to be acceptable and beneficial to the league, the team will need to pay an additional \$20 forfeit fee to become eligible for the playoffs.

DEFAULTS:

- If a team anticipates that it will not have enough players for a day, a representative of that team must contact the office of recreation services via e-mail or phone that they cannot make it. They must do this by or before noon on game day. By doing this a team can avoid a forfeit.
- A default is the same as a forfeit, they are recorded as forfeits. The only difference is for the first default the team will still be able to receive their \$20 forfeit fee at the end of the season.
- A second default will be a forfeit.
- Defaults will not be rescheduled.

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