4 on 4 Flag Football Rules

General IMS Policies and Procedures

All participants are required to complete a waiver of liability form each year. All participants in intramural sports activities assume the risk of injury. Rice University, its employees and agents shall not be liable for injury to person, loss or damage to personal property arising from or in any way resulting from participation in the intramural sports activities.

Flag Football rules will be conducted under the NIRSA rules of the game with the following additions, exceptions, and clarifications. *If you have any further rules questions, please contact ims@rice.edu.*

Captains are required to read the general IM Rules and Eligibility, and inform their team of any changes to policies and/or procedures!

Team Composition

1. Four (4) players are on the field at a time.
2. Three (3) players are required to start the game.
3. Players can compete for only ONE team.
4. Once a participant has played for a team, he/she may NOT transfer to another team.
5. Each team shall designate to the game officials a team captain to make all decisions.

Equipment

1. **JERSEYS/SHIRTS:** Players of opposing teams must wear contrasting colored jerseys. Jerseys must be either long enough so they remain tucked in the pants/shorts during the entire down or short enough so there is a minimum of 4” from the bottom of the jersey to the player’s waistline (the game official will use a fist to measure the distance between the waistline and the bottom of the jersey). Pinnies will be available for teams without matching jerseys.

2. **PANTS/SHORTS:** Each player must wear pants or shorts without any belt loops, pockets, or exposed drawstrings. Pants or shorts may not be turned inside out or taped in order to avoid the pocket violation.

3. **SHOES:** Each player must wear shoes. Tennis/running shoes and rubber molded cleats are permitted. Spikes, screw-in cleats, cleats with metal or ceramic exposed, and apparel not intended for football use (i.e. – gymnastic slippers, ski and logger boots, dress shoes) will not be permitted.
4. **PADS/BRACES**: No pads or braces may be worn above the waist. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material must be covered on both sides and all edges with appropriate slow-recovery padding.

5. **HEADWEAR**: Players may not wear baseball style caps or other rigid headwear. Knit and stocking caps are permitted. Players may wear a headband no wider than two inches and made of non-abrasive cloth, elastic, fiber, soft leather, or rubber. Bandanas with knots are prohibited. Rubber or cloth elastic bands may be used to control hair.

6. **JEWELRY**: No jewelry, including LIVESTRONG bracelets, may be worn. Jewelry must be removed before the participant will be allowed to participate. Medical alert bracelets are permitted but they must be taped down. TAPING OF ALL OTHER JEWELRY IS NOT PERMITTED.

7. **SUNGLASSES**: Players may not wear sunglasses that are metal or rigid (i.e. sport style are acceptable).

**The Game**

1. **LENGTH OF GAME**: The game shall consist of two (2) halves of ten (10) minutes.

2. **TIMING REGULATIONS**: The clock will run continuously, unless a time-out is called, until the last minute of the second half. During the final minute of the second half, the clock will stop for a:

   A. Incomplete Legal/Illegal Forward Pass – clock restarts on the snap
   B. Out Of Bounds Play – clock restarts on the snap
   C. Safety – clock restarts on the snap
   D. Team Timeout – clock restarts on the snap
   E. First Down – clock restarts on the ready for play whistle
   F. Touchdown – clock restarts on the snap (after the extra point try)
   G. Penalty – clock restarts depending on the result of the previous play
   H. Official Timeout – clock restarts at the discretion of the officiating crew
   I. Touchback – clock restarts on the snap
   J. Change Of Possession – clock restarts on the snap
   K. Inadvertent Whistle – clock starts on the ready for play whistle

4. **ONE MINUTE WARNING**: Approximately one minute before the end of each half the referee shall stop the clock and inform both teams of the time remaining in that period. The clock will start on the snap.

5. **HALFTIME**: There will be a two (2) minute halftime.

6. **OVERTIME**: Regular season games can end in a tie. Overtime will only be played during the postseason. Overtime procedures will be as followed:

   A. To start overtime, a coin toss will be conducted with the winner selecting offense, defense, or direction. If additional overtime periods are played, the order of possession will alternate each new period. All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line.
B. Each team will attempt to score by passing from either the 3 yard line for 1 point, from the 10 yard line for 2 points, or from the 20 yard line for 3 points.

C. The defense may intercept the ball and return it for 3 points. In this case, they will win the game. If the team does not score, the overtime will proceed as necessary. The offensive team’s series is over when the defense intercepts a pass.

7. TIME-OUTS: Each team will receive one (1) timeout per game, each 30 seconds in length.

8. MERCY RULE: The game shall be over if a team is behind in the second half by:

   - 40 points or more with five (5) minutes or less remaining
   - 30 points or more with three (3) minutes or less remaining
   - 20 points or more with one (1) minute or less remaining

9. FORFEITS: If a team fails to appear for a scheduled game or match on time a forfeit will be declared. If a team forfeits a contest, the captain’s account will be charged a forfeit fee, and the team will be ineligible for postseason competition. A team with two forfeits will be automatically dropped from the league.

10. PROTESTS: If a team wants to submit a protest, the team captain must stop play immediately and notify the games officials and supervisor. The supervisor will document the appeal and forward it to the Intramural Sports Coordinator. Teams cannot appeal an official’s judgment.

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**Playing Rules**

1. BEGINNING A SERIES: There are no kickoffs. The ball will be put in play from the 10 yard line to begin a half or following a score, touchback, or safety (unless moved by penalty).

2. SERIES OF DOWNS: The team in possession of the ball shall have three (3) downs to advance the ball to the next zone line-to-gain.

3. ZONE LINE-TO-GAIN: The zone line-to-gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such case, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line-to-gain.

4. FIRST DOWNS: A team registers a first down when it crosses or touches the zone line-to-gain. Once the first down has been established, the team may not make another first down by crossing the same line during that series of downs.

5. PLAY CLOCK: The offensive team has 25 seconds to put the ball in play after the referee signals “ready for play” and blows his or her whistle.

6. BALL RESPONSIBILITY: The offensive team must retrieve the ball after each play from scrimmage.

7. MINIMUM LINE PLAYERS: The offensive team must have at least one (1) player on the line of scrimmage at the snap (this may be the center).
8. **ADVANCING THE BALL:** Only a legal forward pass behind the offensive line of scrimmage may advance the ball (Penalty: Illegal Advancement).

9. **DEFENSIVE RUSH:** After 3 seconds have expired, which will be counted out loud by the referee, the defensive team may rush the passer. During this 3 second period, no defensive player may cross the offensive line of scrimmage (Penalty: Encroachment – Live Ball).

10. **TOUCHDOWNS:** A touchdown shall count for six (6) points.

11. **POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN:** After a touchdown, the scoring team shall attempt a PAT. Once the decision is announced, it can only be changed by taking a charged timeout. The options for the try are:
   
   A. One (1) point from the 3-yard line  
   B. Two (2) points from the 10-yard line  
   C. Three (3) points from the 20-yard line  

12. **SAFETY:** Two (2) points shall be awarded for a safety. A safety is scored when a team is de-flagged, downed, or commits a penalty in their own end zone. Exception: a safety is not scored on a change of possession when the ball carrier does not carry the ball out of the end zone or on a change of possession when a player’s momentum carries him/her into the end zone.

13. **GENERAL PENALITIES:**

   **3 Yard Penalties**
   
   A. Delay Of Game  
   B. Encroachment  
   C. False Start  
   D. Illegal Procedure  
   E. Illegal Motion  
   F. Illegal Shift  
   G. Illegal Forward Pass (Loss of Down)  
   H. Intentional Grounding (Loss of Down)  

   **5 Yard Penalties**
   
   A. Flag Guarding  
   B. Illegal Contact  
   C. Holding  
   D. Tripping  
   E. Offensive Pass Interference (Loss of Down)  
   F. Defensive Pass Interference (Automatic First Down)  
   G. Roughing The Passer (Automatic First Down)
Please Note: All final decisions to eligibility and game rules will be at the discretion of the Assistant Director for Intramural Sports.

FURTHER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS MAY BE DIRECTED TO:

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