

P.E. SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

FLAG FOOTBALL



“Participating in organized sports as a child can offer countless physical, mental, and social benefits. We want to create opportunities for kids around the world to experience and learn the sport of football and our hope is to grow the popularity of the flag football on a global level.”

Russell Wilson, Seattle Seahawks Quarterback, Super Bowl Champion and NFL FLAG Chairman

INTRODUCTION

Flag football is a game that can be enjoyed by everyone. It includes running, throwing and catching. A team’s strategy is the most important part of the game. Pads or helmets are not required since tackling or blocking is not allowed.

In flag football games, teams of five players throw and run with a football to move down the field. The team with the ball is referred to as the offense and the team without the ball is called the defense. The defense tries to stop the offense by pulling a flag out of the belt of the player who has the ball.

HISTORY OF THE GAME

The game of American football has been played since the mid-1800’s. The first college game occurred between Princeton and Rutgers in November of 1869. The professional game of football has been played in some form since 1895.



It is believed that touch football had its beginnings in the 1930’s and that flag football was played in the early 1940’s as a recreational sport for military personal. Recreational flag football leagues began to appear in the late 40’s early 50’s.

St. Louis is the birthplace of the first national flag football organization - the National Touch Football League. It was formed in the 1960’s and has played a national championship game since 1971. It also produced the first standardize rulebook and a Hall of Fame for flag football players.

Since then, several leagues have formed. They have included the National Touch Football League, the United States Flag-Touch Football League, the American Football Touch Football League and the Professional Flag Football League.

The Professional Flag Football League was formed in 1997 and, in 1999, played the first professional flag football travel schedule with teams in several large cities.

HOW FLAG FOOTBALL IS PLAYED

A coin toss determines first possession. The winner of the coin toss has possession of the football while losers have choice of end zones to defend.

The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line. An automatic first down by penalty will overrule the other requirements regarding four plays to make either a first down or score.

After the ball is snapped by the center to the quarterback, the team has seven seconds to pass the ball. The center cannot take a direct hand off back from the quarterback (no center sneak play).

A quarterback cannot run with the ball past the line of scrimmage, unless he hands off the ball (tossed or pitched), and it has been returned to him. All players who rush the quarterback must start at least seven yards from the line of scrimmage.

All defensive players are eligible to rush once the ball has been handed off or tossed, or there is a play action fake or fake hand-off. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are placed when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.

All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has

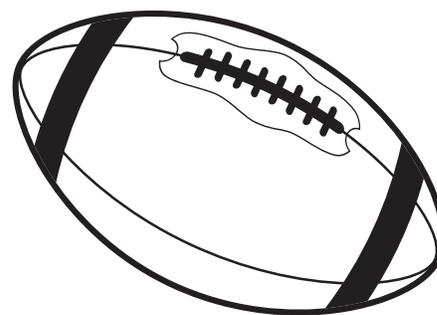


been handed off or tossed behind the line of scrimmage). After a pass is intercepted, the defense becomes the offense at the spot where the interception was made. An interception can also be returned by the defense. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.

The offense may use multiple hand-offs behind the line of scrimmage. Only backward and lateral hand-offs are allowed during the down. Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed and are called running plays. Once the ball carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage, the ball cannot be handed off, tossed, pitched or passed in any way.

Interceptions change the possession of the ball. On interceptions that occur and remain in the end zone, the ball becomes dead and will result in the ball belonging to the intercepting team at its 5-yard line. Should an interception occur in the end zone and the ball carrier leave the end zone, the ball will belong to the intercepting team at the spot the ball becomes dead. However, should the ball carrier return to the end zone and be deflagged, or the ball become dead, the result would be a safety for the other team.

The ball is dead when any part of the ball carrier's body, other than his hand or foot, touches the ground. If a ball carrier's flag falls off, the play will be whistled dead and the ball will be spotted at the spot where the flag fell off. Players are ineligible to catch a pass or receive the ball by hand-off toss or pitch, if their flag has fallen off.



There are no fumbles in flag football. The ball is spotted where the ball left the ball carrier's hand(s). If the ball is fumbled during the snap, the ball is placed at the line of scrimmage.

"No-running zones," are located five yards in front of each end zone. When the ball is on or inside the 5-yard line going towards the opponent's end zone, the offense cannot run.

Penalties are assessed (usually five yards) for breaking the rules.

Six Points are awarded for a touchdown, one point for a point after touchdown (from

5 yards), two points for point after touchdown (from 12 yards), and two points for a safety.

A touchdown is scored when the offense moves the ball into the end zone. After each touchdown, the team that scored attempts to make an extra point. A safety is scored by the defense when it pulls the flag off the ball carrier in the offense's own end zone.

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

No padding or headgear is permitted. In competitive intramural play, cleats are allowed, but must be rubber. Students in physical education classes will play the game wearing tennis shoes, or similar footwear.

In organized league play, all players wear a protective mouthpiece. Official tournament jerseys must be worn during league play as well. Different color shirts or flags will offer most physical education students the contrast needed for informal flag football games during class.



FIELD DIMENSIONS

Length: 80 yards (divided into four 20-yard zones)

Width: 40 yards

End Zones: Maximum ten yards deep, minimum seven yards deep.

No Running Zones: These must be marked five yards from each goal line.

FLAG FOOTBALL NOTES

As an outgrowth of the National Touch Football League (NTFL), the United States Flag and Touch Football League (USTFL) was formed. Their mission is to establish uniform rules and regulations, conduct clinics for training and certify officials of the game. The USFTL tournaments are the largest non-college tournaments in the nation. They draw hundreds of teams and have conferred many National Champions.

Annual National Collegiate Flag Football Championships are played each year at the University of New Orleans. Champions have been crowned every year since 1979. At the college level Flag Football is only an intramural sport.

Archie Manning who played football for the Saints, Oilers and Vikings said, "Flag football is my game. I love flag football. I wish I'd been playing that all along." Other proponents of the sport have said that flag football is a much safer sport to play and likely more exciting than baseball, soccer or golf.

The NFL (National Football League) conducts their own Youth World Championship for children 12-14 years of age. Held in different nations around the world. It is a five man no contact game played between ten countries.

Until relatively recently the chance to throw, catch or kick a football in high school competition was only an opportunity for males. This is changing however, as more and more girls have taken up flag football. Female flag football leagues have sprung up in several states. Football was the last frontier for girls in sports, it's not tackle, but it is a sport that requires skills and knowledge of the game.

More and more high schools are playing flag football. There is even hope that one day the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) will offer scholarships for the sport. Florida is the only state that offers a high school championship in girls flag football and here it ranks eighth out of 20 sanctioned girls sports in terms of number of participants.

Many YMCAs and park districts offer flag football programs and leagues. Check to see if there is a youth program or league offered by your YMCA or park district.

Check out these websites for more information about flag football:

www.usftl.com

www.aftfl.com

www.nflflag.com