



# Diocese of Cleveland CYO

## FLAG FOOTBALL RULES 2023

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CYO game rules may not be altered by mutual consent of the coaches. Only the CYO Administration may authorize changes.

### **SECTION 1 - OFFICIAL TEAM**

- A. Defined as an individual or group of children from one or more Members listed on the team roster that meet the eligibility rules and are approved by the member athletic director, member administrator, and diocesan athletic office.
- B. A CYO team refusing to continue playing a scheduled game for any reason without the consent of the game official or CYO representative may be subject to penalties outlined in Bylaw 10. This also applies to CYO Sanctioned Events.
- C. Flag football is open to boys and girls in grades 1-4. Kindergartners are eligible at the discretion of the member Athletic Director.
- D. An official game will consist of seven (7) players on the field. A game may begin or finish with five (5) players.
- E. The maximum number of athletes on a roster is 18.
- F. A partial roster or combined roster cannot be entered into any tournament or sanctioned event.

### **SECTION 2 - OFFICIALS**

- A. Officials that are approved and registered with the Diocese of Cleveland CYO will be assigned to each game.
- B. Officials have the power to warn or disqualify from the competition anyone who commits acts which intend to influence their decisions.
- C. Officials have the authority to call or suspend a game if conditions warrant.
- D. One official will be used for all games including sanctioned events.
- E. The head coach is the only person that should speak to the officials before, during or after the game.
- F. All individuals responsible for a team and all spectators shall support the referee. Failure to do so will undermine the official's authority and has the potential of creating a hostile environment for the players, the official, and all the other participants and spectators.
  - i. Absolutely no disputing calls, during or after the game, no remarks to the official to watch certain players or attend to rough play. NO YELLING at the official, EVER, and no criticism, sarcasm, harassment, intimidation, or feedback of any kind during or after the game.
  - ii. Violators may be ejected and are subject to disciplinary action by the CYO Charter & Bylaws.

### **SECTION 3 - EQUIPMENT & UNIFORMS**

- A. Game Ball:
  - 1. 1<sup>st</sup>- 2<sup>rd</sup> Grades: Pee Wee size ball.
  - 2. Grade 3 & 4 – Coach's Agreement – Pee Wee or Junior Size
  - 3. Teams are permitted to use either a composite or leather ball.
- B. All athletes are required to wear member issued uniforms.
- C. Numbers on the jersey are MANDATORY. A number shall be printed on the front and back of each jersey. The jerseys must be tucked in.
- D. Pants cannot have pockets, exposed drawstrings, or belt loops.
- E. Football gloves are legal.
- F. Each player must wear a flag belt around the waist with a minimum of two Velcro flags. Flags must be a different color than the players' pants. Flags must be positioned on the hips of the player. Flags must be at least two (2) inches wide and a minimum of twelve inches long. Flags cannot be attached to the pants. Each team must provide its own flags.
- G. Metal cleats are illegal.
- H. All players must have the CYO Emblem on their uniform either sewn or stenciled.
- I. Helmets, shoulder pads and other football pads are not permitted.
- J. A maximum of 3/4 inch rubber or plastic cleats are permitted. Cleats may screw-on or be molded into the shoe. Metal cleats are prohibited.
- K. A mouthpiece must be secure in the player's mouth during the game. A mouthpiece cannot be white or clear in color.

- L. Chains, earrings, other jewelry, glitter, face paint, or other inappropriate items may not be worn during the game.

#### **SECTION 4 - PRE-CONTEST COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. All coaches must be CYO certified.
- B. CYO Credentials are to be worn and visible at all times.
  - 1. Credentials cannot be given to another coach at any time.
  - 2. Coaches who give their credentials to another coach, even for one game, will have their coaching privileges revoked for one year.
  - 3. If a coach has lost or forgotten their credential, they must inform the Site Director and show proof of certification with a photo ID and either the photo of the credential or the coach's name on the certification list.
- C. Coaches are responsible for the supervision of their team before and after the game.
- D. At each game and practice, coaches are to have in their possession: an official team roster, a copy of each athlete's Pre-participation Form and Emergency Medical Authorization Form and a first aid kit.
- E. Each coach must submit their official participation form to the site director before the game.
- F. Bench personnel are limited to:
  - 1. Three credentialed coaches
  - 2. Players listed on the eligibility roster, two (2) water personnel under the age of 16 and six (6) non-players (coaches).
  - 3. Non-players 16 years of age or older must be CYO certified.
  - 4. Non-players under the age of 9 are not allowed in the bench area.
- G. The bench area will be from the twenty (20) yard line to the opposite twenty (20) yard line.

#### **SECTION 5 - PARTICIPATION**

- A. Each athlete must be treated with dignity regardless of his or her ability.
- B. A player on a CYO team **MAY** participate in two different leagues during the CYO season; however a player **MAY NOT** be registered on two CYO Flag Football rosters during the same season.
- C. In order to promote a player learning both offense and defense, each member of the team must play a minimum of half of the game; twelve consecutive minutes in the first half and twelve consecutive minutes in the second half.
- D. Only one player can play all of the offensive plays during a 12-minute segment.
  - 1. Players cannot play quarterback for more than one 12-minute segment per game.
    - a. A team must play four different quarterbacks per game.
    - b. CYO recommends all players play quarterback throughout the season.
  - 2. If a quarterback is injured during their segment of play and can return to the game in the segment, they are allowed to do so.
- E. Substitutions: Substitutions may be made in a timely manner. (Clock is continuously running).
- F. If a coach will not play a player because of missed practice, unsportsmanlike conduct, academics or injury, the coach must inform the official before the game begins and mark the player as 'not participating' on the official participation sheet.
- G. When subbing into the game, the athletes must know exactly who they are going in for to limit down time for subs.
- H. Late Arriving Players: If a player arrives late, it is the coach's discretion to play the athlete. If the athlete is permitted to play, they must play half of the participation requirements.
- I. Guest Player Rule: If a team has less than 8 athletes at a game, a guest player may be moved from the member's other CYO flag football team(s) to fill the positions at the start of a game under the following restrictions:
  - 1. The athlete meets the age/grade restrictions of the squad he/she will assist.
  - 2. The guest player is reported by means of the button on the Coaches Information website page of <https://ccdogle.org/cyo> before the game in which he/she will be used.
  - 3. The same individual may be moved as a guest player for no more than two (2) games during the season.

4. The athlete complies with the number of games per day competition limits as outlined in Section 6.
5. The guest player(s) must meet the minimum participation requirement.
6. Guest player must be reported on the participation form before the competition begins by listing the guest player's name after all the original team's athletes are listed and place "GP" next to their name.
7. Guest players cannot be used if the team has more than 9 players available.
8. Guest players are allowed for sanctioned events. They cannot be used in playoffs or championships.

### SECTION 6 - GAME & TIME LIMITATION

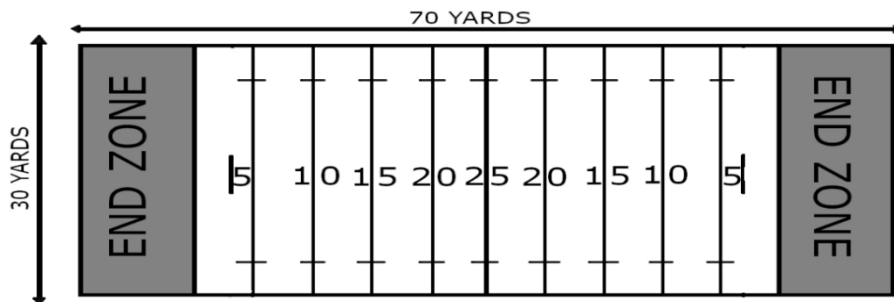
- A. No team or player is permitted to play more than 14 games in a season.
- B. A team is permitted to play a maximum of two (2) games per day.
- C. No team or player may play more than 4 games per week.
- D. Events on Sunday cannot begin until 1:00 PM.
- E. Events cannot start after 8:00 PM.
- F. Practice sessions must be completed by 9:00 PM.

### SECTION 7 - PRACTICE AND COACHING GUIDELINE

- A. Practice or any organized team conditioning cannot start prior to the CYO published first day of practice.
- B. Practice sessions shall be limited to one (1) session per day not to exceed 90 minutes in duration.
- C. Uniforms and equipment may be distributed one (1) week prior to the official first day of practice.
- D. Scrimmages
  1. Three (3) pre-season scrimmages are permitted.
  2. During the regular season one (1) practice session per week is permitted with a CYO registered team of another member.
  3. Officials may be used during scrimmages provided both sets of coaches remain on the field. No score or time limits will be kept. Use of officials is the decision and cost of the teams involved.
- E. One (1) coach may be in the team huddle or offensive & defensive backfield during the game. Coaches must move to the sideline before the snap.

### SECTION 8 - FIELD SIZE & LAYOUT

- A. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a hash mark every five yards from the end zone with hash marks on both sides of the field and a midfield line-to-gain.
  1. Hash marks are located 10 yards from each side line.
- B. Running plays can occur but the ball must be taken outside of the hash marks. Once the ball is taken outside the zone, cut



*CYO inspires young people to know God, to love God, and to serve God through athletics.*

## SECTION 9 - TIMING & OVERTIME

- A. Play Clock – Each team will have 30 seconds to call their play and snap the ball. The clock starts once the official marks the ball ready for play.
- B. Game Clock
  - 1. The length of the game will be two (24) minute halves. 48 minutes total with a continuous clock.
  - 2. Clock will be continuous and will stop:
    - a. Timeouts
    - b. Player injury
  - 3. Half time will be five (5) minutes in length.
  - 4. If there is no scoreboard, it is the responsibility of the officials to notify each head coach when there are four minutes (4:00) remaining in the first half and 2nd half of the game.
  - 5. There are no overtime periods except if needed in sanction events.
- C. Overtime - Sanctioned Events Only
  - 1. When the score is tied at the end of regulation time, each team has an opportunity to score.
  - 2. One minute after the conclusion of the second half, the game officials will conduct a coin toss with the team captains to determine positions and field use.
  - 3. To start the overtime, the offensive team chose to go from the 10 yard line (2 points) or 5 yard line (1 point).
  - 4. Subsequent overtimes will rotate who is on offense first, based on the first overtime.
  - 5. At the start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Overtime, teams must go for two starting from the 10 yard line.
- D. Time Outs
  - 1. Each team will be allowed two (2) thirty (30) second time-outs per half.
  - 2. Unused time-outs do not carry over to the second half.
  - 3. A coach or player on the field may call a time-out.

## SECTION 10 - SCORING/BALL PLACEMENT/FIRST DOWNS

- A. Scoring
  - 1. Touchdown will award 6 points.
  - 2. PAT-Run will award 1 point from the 5-yard line.
  - 3. PAT-Pass will award 2 points from the 5-yard line.
  - 4. Safety will award 2 points.
  - 5. A turnover on an attempted extra point immediately ends the play.
- B. Placement of the ball
  - 1. At the start of the game or half the ball will be put in play on the 5-yard line.
  - 2. After a touchdown the ball will be put in play on the 5-yard line for extra point.
  - 3. After a safety the ball will be put in play at the 5-yard line.
  - 4. The ball is spotted where the ball carriers feet is when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.
  - 5. After each play, the ball will be placed in the middle of the field.
- C. First down
  - 1. The offensive team takes possession at the 5 yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crossed midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
  - 2. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5 yard line.
- D. Special teams are **NOT** permitted. NO Punting.

## SECTION 11 - LIVE BALL VS. DEAD BALL

- A. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- B. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
- C. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.

- D. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- E. Any official can whistle the play dead.
- F. Play is ruled "dead" when:
  1. The ball hits the ground.
  2. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is dead and the next down is played. The ball will be placed at the original line of scrimmage. Example – 1<sup>st</sup> down on the 15 yard line. Bad snap is fumbled. It is now 2<sup>nd</sup> down from the 15 yard line.
  3. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.
  4. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
  5. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
  6. The ball-carrier's knee or arm hits the ground.
  7. The ball-carrier's flag falls out.
  8. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
  9. Inadvertent whistle.
- G. There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble. Fumbles may not be advanced.

## **SECTION 12 - FORMATIONS**

- A. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
- B. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
- C. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
- D. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs or sideways to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.
- E. A quarterback sneak must be around the hash marks (not up the middle).
- F. The Center may not sneak the ball.

## **SECTION 13 - RUNNING**

- A. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot. Either flag is pulled.
- B. Laterals/pitches behind the line of scrimmage are legal.
- C. Laterals/pitches past the line of scrimmage are illegal.
- D. Advancing the ball - The quarterback may run the ball must run outside the hash marks. The ball must be advanced outside the hash marks & pass the line of scrimmage before it may be advanced on the inside.
- E. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- F. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- G. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
- H. For safety reason, spinning is NOT allowed.
- I. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
- J. Flag obstruction - All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.



## SECTION 14 - SCREENING

- A. No intentional contact is not permitted at any age level.
- B. The screen blocker is able to place their hands in front while blocking ONLY to cushion the possible contact by the defense - not DELIVERING A BLOW with the hands. Moving hands forward and initiating contact to the defense are illegal.**
- C. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during a screen block is illegal.
- D. Blocking must be accomplished by screening.
- E. While screening a player must keep their arms to the sides, folded across their chest, or behind from their body or use of their hands.
- F. At no time may a player, while screening, extend their arms or elbows away from their body or use their hands.
- G. Double-teaming and wedge blocking are also prohibited.
- H. Downfield blocking is illegal. Any offensive player who continues running and impedes the progress of a defensive player who is attempting to pull the ball carrier's flag will be called for illegal blocking.

## SECTION 15 - PASSING

- A. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage. The offensive team may make one forward pass (lateral) from behind the line during each down.
- B. The quarterback has a 7 second "pass clock"
  - 1. If the pass is not thrown within 7 seconds the play is ruled dead resulting in a loss of down.
  - 2. If the ball is handed off, the seven-second pass rule is no longer in effect.
- C. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- D. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

## SECTION 16 - RECEIVING

- A. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- B. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
- C. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- D. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- E. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception.
- F. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
- G. Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.

## SECTION 17 - DEFENSIVE RUSH

- A. The defense may not rush on a pass play until the count of three (3) Mississippi by the official.
- B. The defense may rush after the count of three (3) Mississippi regardless if run or pass.
- C. The defense may rush on any handoff, lateral, toss, sweep or reverse.
- D. On a lateral, the defense may rush when the ball leaves the quarterback's hands.

## SECTION 18 - FLAG PULLING

- A. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- B. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
- C. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
- D. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
- E. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- F. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags.
- G. Shirts/jerseys must be tucked in at all times. If a shirt/jersey is hanging out, flag guarding may be called.



## SECTION 19 - PENALTIES

- A. The official will impose all penalties.  
 B. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage except for spot fouls as noted below.

<b>5 Yard Penalties</b>	
Offside	A player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped
False Start	A player charges or moves in a way that indicates the start of the play before the ball is snapped
Flag Guarding	The ball-carrier intentionally obstructs the defender's access to their flag
Holding	The player restrains another player who is not in possession of the ball
Spiking Ball after touchdown	Throwing ball into ground after a touchdown. (celebratory)
Flags out of position & shirts need to be tucked-in. Defense needs a clear view to grasp of runner's flags.	Shirts tucked in at all times so flags are visible and defenders may capture the flags
Illegal Flag Pull (before receiver has ball)	A player pulls the flag off an opponent before they have full possession of the ball
Illegal Forward Pass	A player throws the ball forward once they are past the line of scrimmage
Roughing the Passer	A player makes contact with the passer after they've thrown a forward pass
Stripping	A player smacks or grabs the football out of the ball-carrier's possession
Backfield in motion	Players shifting and not coming to a complete stop before the ball is snapped
Delay of game	Team fails to snap the ball and put it in play by 30 seconds
<b>10 yard Penalties</b>	
Illegal Screening	The player uses physical attempts to gain yardage by obstructing the path of their opponent; <b>moving hands forward</b>
Tackling (Unnecessary roughness against ball carrier. Penalty spot of foul & automatic first down)	Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent
Unnecessary roughness (including pushing out of bounds) Automatic first down/loss of down (offense)	Knocking a player out of bounds and pushing a player excessively out of bounds
Defensive Pass Interference (from line of scrimmage)	The player significantly hinders an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch the ball
Clipping	
Offensive Pass Interference (from line of scrimmage plus loss of down)	The eligible receiver significantly hinders the defensive player's opportunity to intercept the ball
Unnecessary roughness	Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking an opponent
Charging (penalty from spot of foul)	The player challenges their opponent for space without using their arms or elbows
<b>15 yard Penalties</b>	
<b>Tackling</b>	
Unsportsmanlike conduct/Taunting.	A type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams
Altered Uniform/Flags (immediate ejection from the game-coach and player)	
Swearing/Obscene language	Trash talking is offensive language used against opposing coaches, players, officials, league personnel or fans.
Fighting (immediate ejection from game with next game suspension)	Attacking individuals or severely hurting someone

## **SECTION 20 - MERCY RULE**

- A. When a team reaches an 18-point spread differential over their opponents, the team is expected to conduct itself in a manner that the game officials and CYO administration feel show respect and dignity towards its opponent.
- B. A team ahead by eighteen points (18) may not pass the ball.
- C. The winning team once they cross midfield will only have 3 downs to score instead of 4.
- D. The losing team will start possession at midfield.
- E. Penalty for Violation of the Mercy Rule
  - 1. First Offense - Warning
  - 2. Second Offense - Unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on the head coach
  - 3. Third Offense - Unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and ejection on the head coach.
  - 4. Fourth Offense – Coach will be suspended for the remainder of the season.

## **SECTION 21 - LIGHTNING & INCLEMENT WEATHER**

- A. When thunder is heard or a lightning bolt is seen at a practice or competition, the teams must suspend play and take shelter immediately. Once play has been suspended, a period of at least 30 minutes after the last thunder heard or lightning flash is witnessed must be honored prior to resuming play/practice.
- B. Contest or CYO officials assume authority for competitions when they arrive on the field. When the officials recognize inclement weather they are duty bound to suspend the game. Coaches and member athletic directors are responsible for application of this policy at practice.
- C. Announcements related to the status of competitions will be posted on the main page of the schedule website, telephone announcement lines, Twitter (@CYOSportsDOC) and media as needed.

## **SECTION 22 - CAUTION AND DISQUALIFICATION**

- A. Teams are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that the game officials and CYO administration feel shows respect and dignity towards its opponent.
- B. Athletes, coaches, parents, or fans who are removed from a game for any reason shall be suspended for the next scheduled game. The ejected person may not associate with the team during the duration of the suspension, this includes practices and scrimmages. The individual must meet with the member administrator about the incident and obtain a signed letter from the member administrator requesting CYO Administration to permit the individual to rejoin the team.
- C. Athletes, coaches, parents, or fans that are removed from a match for a second time will not be permitted to attend any competitions for the remainder of the season. The individual must meet with the member administrator about the incident and obtain a signed letter from the member administrator asking the diocesan administration to permit the individual to attend events in the subsequent season.
- D. There will be a zero tolerance shown towards any inappropriate or abusive behavior from any participants, coaches and/or spectators
- E. Any participant, coach or spectator who feels the necessity to:
  - Persistently or willfully question or challenge the rulings of referees
  - Berate or abuse referees
  - Berate or abuse players & coaches
  - Berate or abuse other parents or spectators
  - Display conduct which is inappropriate in a sporting environment
  - Breach any applicable CYO Charter/Bylaws laws
- F. Anyone breaching any existing CYO rule, codes of conduct, policies or guidelines will be asked to leave the site immediately.