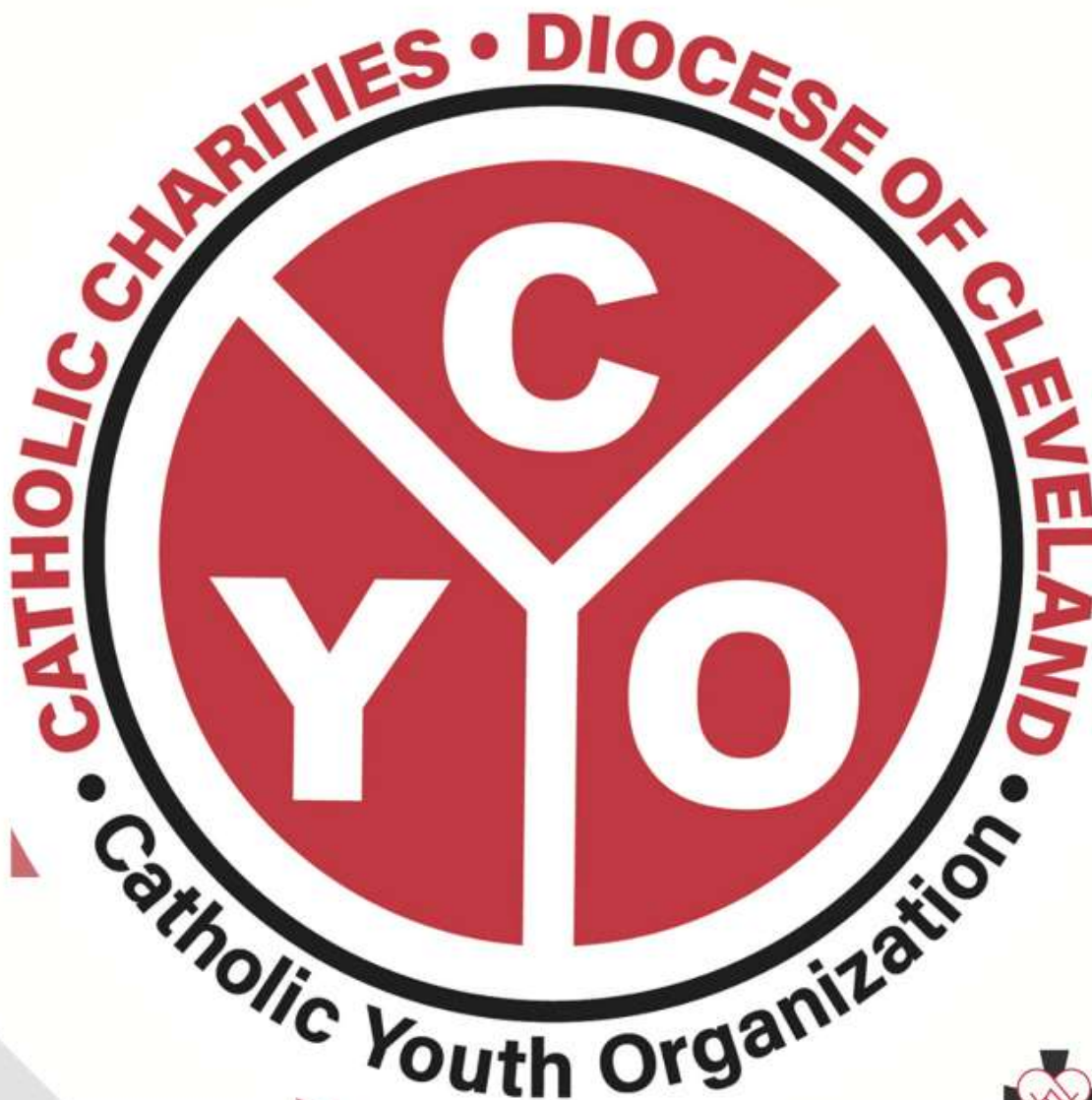


TACKLE FOOTBALL RULES

FALL 2026

The Way We do Things Here



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CYO POSITION ON WEIGHT

- CYO consulted with Pediatric Sports Medicine Medical Doctors to request a recommendation for minimum and maximum weight requirements for children playing tackle football.
- Medical experts reviewed the options of lower and upper direct weight limits and the option of basing participation on each athlete's Body Mass Index (BMI) and its effect on athletic performance.
- After reviewing the options, CYO accepts the medical recommendations as follows:
 1. A child must weigh at least 85 lbs. to play in grades 7 - 8 CYO tackle football.
 2. A child weighing 75 lbs. or less may not play in grades 7 - 8 CYO tackle football.
 3. A child weighing 75 – 85 lbs. must get a waiver signed by a parent AND a medical doctor to play.
 4. There is no upper weight limit in grades 7 – 8 CYO tackle football.



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

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Football Rules apply in this league with the exceptions contained within. CYO game rules may not be altered by mutual consent of the coaches. Only the CYO office 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 and within the assigned Football Section that meet the eligibility rules and are approved by the member athletic director, Member Administrator and CYO Office.
- B. The team name is the name of the Sponsoring Organizations. Refer to Bylaw 4, Section 1.
- C. 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 as outlined in Bylaw 10.
- D. A partial roster or combined roster cannot be entered into any tournament or sanctioned event.
- E. Only athletes assigned to their CYO Football Section are eligible to play for the designated Sponsoring Organization. See Football Section List.
- F. 6th graders, regardless of their weight, are not eligible to play in this division.
- G. Any female player or player under 90 pounds may be the kicker only. Only one player per team is permitted in this one position.

SECTION 2 - OFFICIALS

- A. Officials that are certified 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. Three (3) - Four (4) officials will be assigned to each regular season game.
- E. The head coach and the team captain are the only people that should speak to the officials before, during or after the game.
- F. Prior to the game, the head coach will notify the referee of the designated representative (coach or player) who will make decisions regarding penalty acceptance or declination.

SECTION 3 - EQUIPMENT & UNIFORMS

- A. Game Ball:
 - 1. The Youth size ball will be used.
 - 2. Teams are permitted to use either a composite or leather ball.
 - 3. Any official may order the ball changed between downs.
- B. Electronic Devices:
 - 1. Walkie-talkies, cell phones, or any other electronic communication systems are not permitted within the competition area.
 - 2. Teams are permitted to only videotape their games.
 - a. Videotaping is only permitted from areas approved by the facility but is never permitted from within the competition area, team bench area or other unapproved areas.
 - b. Individuals videotaping or photographers must be positioned at least two yards from the sideline or end zone.
 - c. Coaches, Fans, etc. are not permitted to videotape an opponent's game or practice.
- C. All athletes are required to wear member issued uniforms WITH THE TEAM NAME (OR NICKNAME OF THE MEMBER) OF THE SPONSORING ORGANIZATION.
- D. Numbers on the jersey are MANDATORY. A number shall be printed on the front and back of each jersey. The number on the back of the jersey shall be at least 10 inches in height, while the number on the front of the jersey shall be at least 8 inches in height. The bars or strokes should be approximately 1-1/2 inches wide. THE NUMBER ZERO IS LEGAL.
- E. The jersey number requirements by position and the requirement of the visiting team to wear a white jersey of the NFHS do not apply to CYO competitions.
- F. All players must have the CYO Emblem on their uniform either sewn or stenciled.

- G. All participants must be properly equipped and fitted by the members with the following items:
 - 1. Helmets that are NOCSAE certified. All helmets must have the certified imprint and special warning stickers related to injuries. At least a four snap chin strap shall be required to secure the helmet.
 - 2. Shoulder pads.
 - 3. Football pants with pads for the hips, tailbone, thighs and knees.
- H. 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.
- I. A mouthpiece must be secure in the player's mouth during the game. If a mouthpiece is not orthodontist designed it must be attached to the faceguard and be of any readily visible color. A mouthpiece cannot be white or clear in color.
- J. Chains, earrings, other jewelry, glitter, face paint or other inappropriate items may not be worn during the game.
- K. An American flag and or a commemorative/memorial patch not to exceed 2 by 3 inches and with the approval of the CYO Administration may be worn on each of the uniform apparel provided neither the flag nor patch interferes with the visibility of the player's number.
- L. The coach as well as the player in violation of the uniform standards will be ejected from the game and a 15-yard penalty assessed. A player equipment violation will not result in a second game suspension.

SECTION 4 - PRE-CONTEST COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Coaches must be CYO certified and have their "Fall 2026" season sticker visible on their credential to have access to the sidelines during games.
- B. CYO recertification credentials are to be always worn and visible.
 - 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.
- 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. A pre-game conference will be held between the officials, coaches and captains.
- F. Each coach must submit their official participation form to the site director before the game.
- G. Bench personnel are limited to:
 - 1. Players listed on the eligibility roster, two (2) water personnel under the age of 16 and six (6) non-players (coaches) and (1) Team Play Counter. For bench control, team doctors must position themselves in the stands until an injured player needs access to them.
 - 2. Non-players 16 years of age or older must be CYO certified.
 - 3. Non-players under the age of 9 are not allowed in the bench area.
 - 4. The team box area will be from the 25-yard line to the opposite twenty-five-yard line.
- H. Chains and Down Marker Crews:
 - 1. The personnel must be at least a high school senior or older. The crew must report to the game officials at least ten (10) minutes before the start of the game.
 - 2. If the team assigns the people serving in this capacity, the head coach is responsible for the actions, verbal or otherwise, of the people assigned.
 - 3. The visiting team will provide two members of the chain and down marker crew and the home team one. The chain crew will be positioned on the visiting side of the field. Please make sure they are assigned in advance, so it is not delaying the start of the game.

SECTION 5 - PARTICIPATION

- A. Each athlete must be treated with dignity regardless of their ability.
- B. A player on a CYO team may not participate on any other football team during the CYO season. For purposes of defining eligibility, a player may not be on another team from the published CYO roster due date and the completion of the team's final game.
- C. All participants in all divisions are to meet the following requirements:

1. Each team will provide the Play Counter, opposing coach and Site Director with a completed team participation form that will indicate all eligible players and those players on the official team roster that may be unable to play. Each team must supply their own play counter to monitor their teams' participation. The Team Participation Form will be interpreted at the Coach's Meeting
2. Each eligible player on the team participation form must play a minimum of non-penalty plays based upon the following game day roster size.
 - a. 20 or fewer players able to play - Each player must play a minimum of ten (10) non-penalty plays per game. At least five (5) of the plays must take place in the 1st half of the game.
 - b. 21 to 24 players able to play - Each player must play a minimum of eight (8) non-penalty plays per game. At least four (4) of the plays must take place in the 1st half of the game.
 - G. 25 or more players able to play - Each player must play a minimum of six (6) non-penalty plays per game. At least three (3) of the plays must take place in the 1st half of the game.
- D. 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.
- E. It is encouraged to play all eligible athletes more than the minimum requirements.
- F. Late Arriving Players:
 1. If a player arrives late at a game during the first or second quarter and is permitted to play by the coach, the player is to meet the full participation requirement of the game.
 2. If a player arrives late to a game during the third or fourth quarter and is permitted to play by the coach, the player is to meet one half of the participation requirement for the total game.
- G. Guest Player Rule: Since teams are assigned by sections, there is no Guest Player Rule in this program.**
- H. Upon violation of the Participation Rule, the Play Counter will notify the Game Officials and Site Director and following penalty will be assessed:
 1. For violations discovered at the end of the game, the Site Director will contact the CYO Athletic office with the details and documentation of the violation and the CYO Administration will assess the penalties toward the coach or team. If after a review a violation is confirmed, a forfeiture of the game will be assessed.
 2. All violations of the participation rules are to be communicated to the CYO Athletic Office by the Site Director and game officials by the morning following the infraction.

SECTION 6 - GAME & TIME LIMITATION

- A. No team or player is permitted to play more than 10 games in a season.
- B. No team or player may play in more than one game in a day.
- C. No team or player may play more than two 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 - LIGHTNING & INCLEMENT WEATHER

- A. The OHSAA lightning & inclement weather policy is in effect.
- B. 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.
- C. Contest or CYO officials assume authority for competitions when they arrive on the field. When the officials recognize inclement weather, they are bound to suspend the game. Coaches and member athletic directors are responsible for applying this policy at practice.
- D. Announcements related to the status of competitions will be posted on the main page of the website or telephone announcement lines and media as needed.
- E. Contests that are suspended because of inclement weather and cannot be resumed within a reasonable time at the same site will be cancelled, unless deemed necessary to reschedule by the CYO Administration.

F. The halftime intermission may be shortened by mutual agreement of opposing coaches if a weather delay occurs during the last three minutes of the second period.

G. **Weather Statement**

1. Weather conditions are continuously monitored by CYO staff and weather professionals.
2. Weather delays or cancelation decisions will be made ONLY BY CYO STAFF and communicated promptly.
3. Official contest delays or cancellations re weather is available on the scheduling page of the CYO website.
4. When lightning is detected within a 10-mile radius, all outdoor activities will be suspended immediately.
5. When heat index thresholds become too high, outdoor events may be delayed or canceled.
6. Events may be delayed, relocated, or rescheduled due to field or facility conditions.

SECTION 8 - 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 two (2) hours in duration.
- C. Uniforms and equipment may be distributed three (3) weeks prior to the official first day of practice. **No conditioning or coaching instructions may take place until approval of CYO Administration**
- D. All athletes must participate in five days of pre-season physical acclimation prior to any physical contact. Athletes reporting late must have at least five days of physical acclimation prior to any physical contact. This rule applies to all teams & participants.
1. Days 1 & 2 – No Pads, shorts, helmets and shoes can be worn, no physical contact.
 2. Days 3 & 4 – Shoulder pads may be added, but no contact is permitted.
 3. Day 5 – Full equipment may be worn, but contact is prohibited.
 4. Athletes must complete 2 days of **no pads**; shorts, helmets, shoes can be worn, but no physical contact before moving onto adding shoulder pads. Once shoulder pads are added, no contact is permitted. After at least 2 days of shoulder pads and no contact, full equipment may be worn but contact is prohibited.
- E. Scrimmages:
1. Three (3) pre-season scrimmages are permitted.
 2. Officials may be used during scrimmages provided both sets of coaches remain on the field. No score or time limit will be kept. Use of officials is the decision and cost of the teams involved.

SECTION 9 - COMPETITION RULES

A. Clock

1. The length of the four (4) quarters shall be Eight (8) minutes, with a one-minute rest period between quarters.
2. Half time will be seven (7) minutes in length.
3. Before starting the second half of the game, the officials shall notify each team when three minutes remain in half time for the players to warm-up.
4. Approximately four (4) minutes before the end of each half, the official shall notify the field captains and their coaches of the time remaining. If a field clock is the official timepiece, neither notification nor stoppage of the clock is required.
5. A forty (40) second play clock will be kept by the referee. The clock will begin from when the subsequent play ends and the ball is spotted.
6. If the score is tied at the end of regulation in a regular season game, the process outlined in Section 11 will be followed.
7. The official may grant an exception to the play clock administration following a foul committed with less than 2 minutes. Any foul committed within the last two minutes of either half will automatically result in the offended team's option to start the game clock on the snap. Prior to this change, the offended team was required to accept its opponent's penalty in order to gain control of the game clock.
8. The play clock administration following a foul committed by the defensive team has changed.

B. Time Outs

1. Each team will be allowed three (3) sixty (60) second time-outs per half of a game.
2. Unused time-outs do not carry over to the second half or overtime periods.
3. Each team will be allowed one (1) time-out per overtime.

C. Scoring

1. Touchdown will award 6 points
2. Field Goal will be awarded 3 points
3. PAT-Run/Pass will award 1 point from the 3-yard line
4. PAT-Run/Pass will award 2 points from the +5-yard line
5. PAT-Kick will be awarded 2 points
6. Safety will award 2 points
7. Successful conversion of a botched snap on a PAT-Kick attempt will award 1 point.
8. Field Goals and PAT-Kicks are permitted in all games, if the playing field has goal posts.
9. All PAT-Kicks are from the 3-yard line.
10. Changing PAT type
 - a. Once a decision on the type of PAT attempt has been made, to make a change, a timeout must be called.
 - b. The decision of PAT type can be changed after a penalty.

D. Placement of the ball

1. At the start of the game or half the ball will be put in play on the 30-yard line.
2. After a Touchdown or Field Goal the ball will be put in play on the 30-yard line.
3. After a Touchback the ball will be put in play on the 20-yard line.
4. After a safety the ball will be put in play at the 50-yard line.
5. Overtime procedures in Section 11 will be followed when needed.

E. Kicking

1. Kick-offs are not permitted.
2. Punting
 - a. Punting Team
 - i. Punts must be DECLARED at the beginning of the down, to allow receiving team to respond. No quick kicks or fake punts are allowed.
 - ii. Ball must be snapped to the punter 5 yards or more behind the line of scrimmage. There are no fumbles or muffs, the punter must retrieve and punt the ball unobstructed.
 - iii. Punter must punt the ball from 5 yards or more behind the line of scrimmage.
 - iv. Punting team may run down field after the ball is punted.
 - b. Receiving Team
 - i. At least 9 receiving team players must be within 10 yards of line of Scrimmage, at the snap. 2 players may go anywhere on the field.
 - ii. Punts cannot be intentionally blocked.
 - iii. The receiving team cannot cross the line of scrimmage until after ball is punted.
 - iv. Receiving players may block only within the first 5 yards of the line of scrimmage.
 - c. Both Teams
 - i. No intentional player contact by either team is allowed beyond 5 yards of the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. Ball is dead when it is caught or secured by the receiving team, secured by the kicking team, rolls to a stop, or goes out of bounds.
 - iii. Receiving team muffs are not fumbles but are treated as a first touch. Ball is placed at the point of first touch, or where it becomes dead, whichever is closer to receiving teams' goal line.
 - iv. If the ball is caught on the fly, it is dead, and the receiving teams gets a 10-yard return from the spot of catching.
 - v. Any violations of Punting Team rules 1,2,3,4, and Receiving Team rules 1, 2, 3, are 5-yard penalties.
 - vi. Any contact fouls, including blocking beyond the line of scrimmage, are 15-yard personal fouls.
 - d. Penalties against the receiving team, if accepted, will be measured from the line of scrimmage and down replayed, if not a first down.
 - e. Penalties against the kicking team, if accepted, can be taken at the line of scrimmage and down replayed, or added on to the end of the play.

3. Regular offensive rules are in effect during an extra point and field goal attempt, with the exception that any player may attempt a kick regardless of the player has a Dot or not.
 4. Try for point (PAT) after a touchdown shall be attempted from the three (3) yard line.
 5. The try will end when the kick is good, or it is obvious the try will fail.
 6. On a bad snap in the backfield, a dotted kicker may take part in the play as a ball carrier or blocker.
- F. Incidental possession of the ball by a player with a "Dot"
1. A player with a "Dot" can advance the ball on incidental possession resulting from a fumble, tipped ball, bad snap on a kick or other non-scripted means.
 2. If the game official believes that the possession of the ball by a "Dot" player was a scripted or organized play, the play will be blown dead, and an unsportsmanlike penalty may be assessed to the offending team.

SECTION 10 - MERCY RULE

- A. When a team reaches an **21-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. THE MERCY RULE IS IN EFFECT ANY TIME IN THE SECOND HALF.
- C. The leading team must punt on 4th down, if the ball is outside the defensive team's 30-yard line. If the ball is inside the defensive team's 30-yard line, the punt will not take place, but the ball is given over to the other team and placed at their own 20-yard line.
- D. The clock will be run continuously during the second half ONLY, with the following exceptions:
1. An official's time-out is called for injured player, following a change of team possession, a score or other reason initiated by the game official.
 2. A charged team time-out is called.
 3. The point differential is less than **21 points**.
- E. We encourage all coaches to stop throwing **deep passes (10+ yards)** when they are up **21+ points**. If you see the score getting out of hand, please do the right thing and change things up. It needs to be so obvious that the other coach could appreciate the sportsmanship you are portraying.
- F. The Mercy Rule cannot be waived for playoffs, championship games or sanctioned events.
- G. 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 of the head coach.
 4. Fourth Offense - Forfeit Loss and head coach removed for the remainder of the season.

SECTION 11 - OVERTIME PROCEDURE

- A. When the score is tied at the end of regulation time, each team has an opportunity for an offensive series of downs.
- B. A field goal attempt is permitted during any down.
- C. Three minutes after the conclusion of the fourth quarter the game officials will conduct a coin toss with the team captains to determine positions and field use. If a field only has goal posts at one end, that end of the field will be used for each overtime period.
- D. To start the overtime,
1. The offensive team will put the ball in play, first and ten, on the defensive team's 20-yard line.
 2. If the team on offense scores a touchdown, it is entitled to the opportunity for a PAT unless the points would not affect the outcome of the game.
 3. If the defensive team gains position, the ball becomes dead immediately and the offensive team's series of downs ends.
4. After the first team on offense has completed its series of downs, the first team on defense will become the offensive team with the ball in its possession at the same 20-yard line.
- E. If the score remains tied after each team has been given one series of downs in the first overtime period, there shall be a two-minute intermission then the procedure will be repeated from the 10-yard line, first and goal.

- F. If the score remains tied after each team has been given one series of downs in the second overtime period, there shall be a two-minute intermission then the procedure will be repeated from the 10-yard line, first and goal.
- G. If the score remains tied after each team has been given one series of downs in the third overtime, there shall be a five-minute intermission then the procedure will be repeated from the 10-yard line, first and goal until a winner is determined. A five-minute intermission will be held between each additional overtime.

SECTION 12 - PLAYER WEIGHT REQUIREMENT

- A. Players at weigh-in that are recorded over **160 pounds** shall be given a lime green "Dot" that is to be placed on the right front and left back of the player's helmet.
- B. There is no maximum weight.
- C. Players with a "Dot" are permitted to participate in the following positions.
 - 1. Offensive line, tackle to tackle and must be "covered" by an end.
 - 2. Four defensive line positions. These defensive linemen may line up in either a down or a 2-point stance. Their alignment must be from the outside shoulder of the offensive tackle to outside shoulder of the offensive tackle. Gap alignment is permitted according to the NFHS rules. All dots must play the line of scrimmage. **If the offense lines up with a Tight End, a defensive Dot can align on the outside shoulder of the Tight End.** Dots are not permitted to drop into coverage at the snap.
 - 3. Punter
 - 4. Place-Kicker
 - 5. Holder for a Kicker
 - 6. Tight End
 - a. The tight end cannot be flexed or split out.
 - b. The tight end is only allowed to catch a forward pass past the line of scrimmage – no reverses, shuffle pass, step back screens, or hook & ladder.
 - c. The tight end can ONLY line up next to the offensive tackle.
 - d. The tight end can be AT THE LEAST double-teamed if not triple covered on every pass play without disturbing the integrity of the rest of the defense.
 - e. The tight end can advance the ball upon a catch.**
- D. Players that weigh-in at less than 90 pounds and more than 80 pounds are required to submit an Official CYO Weight Release Form, signed by the player, his parents or legal guardians, and physician to the CYO Office before the athlete participates in practice or games.
- E. Players that weigh-in at less than 80 pounds are not eligible to participate in practice or games.

SECTION 13 - WEIGH-INS AND CHALLENGES

- A. Weigh-ins
 - 1. All players must weigh-in at the first scheduled weigh-in. After the first weigh-in, no new player may begin to practice with a team and officially register until they are weighed in by the CYO administration.
 - 2. Mid-season weigh-in for players who ONLY weighed in within 5 pounds of the weight limit **(155-165)** at the initial weigh limit and any dot wishing to "remove" their dot.
- B. Procedures for Weigh-ins:
 - 1. Teams will present the athletes in the order they are listed on the team eligibility roster (Alphabetical).
 - 2. Athletes will wear their game jersey, shorts and socks when asked to stand on the scale. Any athlete who does not come dressed as described will not be weighed. Adding or removing clothing is strictly forbidden.
 - 3. The scale will be visible to the head coach.
- C. Sweating Down - Any coach found to suggest or encourage a player to "sweat down" to meet weight limitations shall face a minimum penalty of suspension for two years.
- D. Weight Challenge
 - 1. To initiate a challenge, the challenging Head Coach must file the challenge in writing and submit the \$50.00 filing fee to the CYO Athletic Office at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled game with the team to be challenged.

2. The document must contain the name of player or players being challenged, their uniform number and the CYO Member they represent.
3. A team can submit a maximum of 4 weight challenges per season.
4. A challenge is permissible at any time during the regular season.
5. The challenged player or players will be weighed in at the scheduled appointment of the CYO Athletic Office.
6. If the challenged player or players exceed the weight limit, the player or players then shall add a dot to their helmet and may participate in accordance with the "Dot" restrictions. The player must weigh in again at the next scheduled weigh if the player wishes to remove participation restrictions.

SECTION 14 - POST SEASON PLAYOFFS

Teams will be placed on brackets based upon their final regular season record and other criteria discussed at the pre-season coach's meetings.

SECTION 15 - 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. CYO is dedicated to the safety of every child, parent and adult. We will not tolerate any form of aggressive or abusive behavior in the CYO community. Examples include: yelling at officials or site personnel; physical intimidation or threatening behavior; verbal or physical harassment; and any disruptive behaviors. If any of these behaviors occur, consequences will be assessed as outlined in **Bylaw 9** of the CYO Charter & Bylaws.

<https://www.ccdocle.org/files/assets/2025-26charterandbylawsfinal.pdf>

(July 2026)

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