

Diocese of Cleveland CYO

Padded Flag Football

Giving the Very Best of Yourself!

**Rules
2025**



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The purpose of this program is to add helmets and shoulder pads into the game of flag football.

SECTION 1 - OFFICIAL TEAM

- A. Defined as an individual or group of children from one member on the team roster that meet the eligibility rules and are approved by the member athletic director, Member Administrator, and CYO 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.
- C. 4th Grade Division Only
 - 1. An official 7-man Padded Flag football team will consist of a minimum of 7 boys or girls.
 - 2. No roster number restriction to encourage position rotation.
 - 3. A game may begin or finish with five (5) players.
 - 4. Athletes in grades 1-3 are NOT eligible for this pilot program.
 - 5. **Eligibility**
 - a. Players can only play padded flag if your parish sponsors a team.
 - b. No Neighborhood children or section parishes are eligible.
 - 6. All players must be registered from the same sponsoring organizations' parish or school.
- D. The maximum number of athletes on a roster is 18.
- E. There are no **Sanctioned Events**.

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. One official will be used for all games. The head coach and the team captain are the only persons that should speak to the officials before, during, or after the game.
- E. The head coach and the team captain are the only persons that should speak to the officials before, during, or after the game.

SECTION 3 - EQUIPMENT & UNIFORMS

- A. Game Ball:
 - 1. The **Junior** size ball will be used.
 - 2. 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 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.
- D. Because of the "all players, all positions, all skills philosophy, there are no restrictions on jersey numbers or player positions.
- E. All players must have the CYO Emblem on their uniform either sewn or stenciled.
- F. The Flag Belts to be used are "Triple Threat" brand Flag Football Belts.
- G. Flag Belts must have three (3) flags clearly exposed with no obstructions with one on each hip & tailbone.
- H. All participants must be properly equipped and fitted by the member 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 are permitted.
- I. 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.
- J. Pants cannot have pockets, exposed drawstrings, or belt loops.
- K. Football gloves are legal.

- L. 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 face-guard and be of any readily visible color. A mouthpiece cannot be white or clear in color.
- M. All Electronic Devices are prohibited. Coaches, Fans, etc. are not permitted to videotape an opponent's game or practice.
- N. Chains, earrings, other jewelry, glitter, face paint, or other inappropriate items may not be worn during the game.
- O. 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.

SECTION 4 - PRE-CONTEST COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. All head and assistant coaches must be CYO certified and re-certified every season to have access to the sideline.
- B. CYO Credentials are to be always worn and visible.
 - 1. ALL Padded Flag Coaches must attend CYO Continuing Education/Re-Certification class each year.
 - 2. Credentials cannot be given to another coach at any time.
 - 3. Coaches who give their credentials to another coach, even for one game, will have their coaching privileges revoked for one year.
 - 4. 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, during, 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 flag football participation form to the site director before each game. The Flag Football Roster Form will be used.
- G. Bench personnel are limited to:
 - 1. Players listed on the eligibility roster, two (2) water personnel under the age of 16 and four (3) non-players (coaches).
 - 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.
- H. First Downs & Chains and Down Marker Crew
 - 1. Upon the start of a possession or after a first down the offensive team will have 4 plays to gain 10 yards.
 - 2. Unless it is inside the 10-yard line in which it will be first & goal.
 - 3. Use of down markers at host sites shall be used.
 - 4. **Chain Crew:** The 3 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.
 - 5. If the team assigns individuals to serve in this capacity, the head coach is responsible for the actions, verbal or otherwise, of the people assigned.
 - 6. The visiting team will provide the chain and down marker crew and will be positioned on the visiting sideline.

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. Each member of the team must play a minimum of one quarter per half.
- D. All players should have at least one offensive and defensive line position as well as one offensive and defensive backfield position to play each game.
- E. Guest Players are not allowed.

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 1 game in a day.
- C. No team or player may play more than 2 games per weekend.
- 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 duty bound to suspend the game. Coaches and member athletic directors are responsible for application of this policy at practice.
- D. Announcements related to the status of competitions will be posted on the main page of the schedule website or telephone announcement lines and media as needed.
- E. Contests that are suspended because of inclement weather and cannot be resumed with-in a reasonable time at the same site will be cancelled, unless deemed necessary to reschedule by the CYO Administration.
- F. **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 90 minutes in duration.
- C. All athletes must participate in three days of 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. Day 1 – No Pads. Shorts, helmets, and shoes can be worn, no physical contact.
 - 2. Day 2 – Shoulder pads may be added, but no contact is permitted.
 - 3. Day 2 – 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.
- 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 9 - COMPETITION RULES

- A. Field Size: 70 yards in length and 30 yards in width and a ten yard end zone. No hash marks will be used.
- B. Offense always begin at the 5-yard line.
- C. No Special Teams

- D. No tackling is permitted.
- E. Blocking must be accomplished by screening.
- F. **Screening: Blocking** is with thrusting the hands into opponent's chest area while keeping the head away from contact. No blocking below the waist. Hands outside the opponent's frame is holding
- G. Downfield blocking is allowed with the same technique stated above.
- H. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during a screen block is illegal.
- I. At no time may a player, while screening, extend their arms or elbows away from their body or use their hands.
- J. Double-teaming and wedge blocking are prohibited.
- K. Game Clock
 - 1. The offensive play clock will be thirty-five (35) seconds from the official whistle that play may resume.
 - 2. The length of the game will be two (24) minute halves. 48 minutes total with a continuous clock.
 - 3. Clock will be continuous and will stop:
 - a. Timeouts - Each team will be allowed two (2) sixty (60) second time-outs per half of a game.
 - b. Player injury
 - 4. Half time will be five (5) minutes in length.
 - 5. 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.
- L. Scoring:
 - 1. Touchdown will award 6 points
 - 2. PAT- Run will be awarded 1 point from the 3-yard line.
 - 3. PAT- Pass will award 2 points from the 5-yard line.
 - 4. There are no field goal attempts.
 - 5. There are no defensive Touchdowns. There are no two Point safeties.
 - 6. The official will pull the flags of the scoring player after the score. If the flags did not come off as intended, the scoring team will be penalized for flag belt manipulation, the score does not count and the penalty is assessed from the line of scrimmage.
 - 7. Changing PAT type
 - a. Once a decision on the type of PAT to attempt has been made, in order to make a change, a timeout must be called.
 - b. The decision of PAT type can be changed after a penalty.
- M. Overtime: If at the end of regulation, the score is tied, the game will result in a tie. There is no overtime.
- N. Placement of the ball:
 - 1. Each possession starts with the ball on the 5-yard line.
 - 2. Kicking: Special teams are **NOT** permitted. NO punting.
 - 3. After each play, the ball is spotted in the middle of the field. Hash marks are not used.
 - 4. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
- O. Flag Pulling
 - 1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
 - 2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
 - 3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
 - 4. 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.
 - 5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
 - 6. 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.
 - 7. Shirts/jerseys must be always tucked in. If a shirt/jersey is hanging out, flag guarding may be called.

SECTION 10 - 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. 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 11 - SUPPLEMENTAL RULES

- A. Turnovers:
 - 1. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception.
 - 2. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
 - 3. Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.
 - 4. Fumbled snaps are dead - the next down will start from original Line of Scrimmage.
 - a. Defenders may not strip the ball, attempt to strip the ball, or punch at the ball in the attempt to dislodge the ball. Play will be blown dead at the spot and multiple offenses will result in 10-yard penalties.
 - b. There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball dropped.
- B. Penalties
 - 1. All 15 yard penalties are enforced. A second tackle penalty will be just cause for an ejection.
 - 2. All personal foul penalties require an immediate substitution from the field for a minimum of one play to allow coaches to address misconduct and promote good sportsmanship. This is referred as a 'cooling off period.'
- C. Running
 - 1. 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. The ball is marked in the middle of the field.
 - 2. Running and pass plays may attack anywhere on the field.
 - 3. Laterals/pitches behind the line of scrimmage are legal.
 - 4. Laterals/pitches past the line of scrimmage are illegal.
 - 5. Running with the ball - Despite wearing helmets and shoulder pads, the only way the defense can get a player "down" is by pulling their flag. Therefore, ball-carriers cannot lower their shoulder, run through defenders who are in position first, stiff-arm, or flag guard in anyway. The play will be blown dead at the spot this infraction occurs. Multiple offenses will result in a 10-yard penalty from the spot of the infraction. Runners need to be taught to avoid defenders not run through them.
 - 6. 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.
 - 7. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - 8. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
 - 9. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that they have done so to avoid collision with another player without a play guarding penalty enforced
 - 10. For safety reason, spinning is NOT allowed.
 - 11. Flag Obstruction - The flags must be on the player's hips and free of obstruction. Deliberately obstructing the flags will be considered flag guarding.
- D. Offensive Adjustments:
 - 1. Four players on the line - 3 interior lineman are ineligible.
 - 2. Each play must include three offensive linemen - a center, and two guards, one on either side of the center. These players are ineligible for first touch as the receiver of a pass regardless of the numbers on their jerseys.

Player rotations may result with traditional non-lineman numbers at these positions for the purpose of fundamental skills development.

3. Guards are required to play from a two-point stance maximum 1 yard split. There are NO three-point stances.
 4. The Center Snap:
 - a. The ball must be snapped between the legs to start the play, not off to one side.
 - b. The center may snap the ball with either 1 or 2 hands. 1 hand is encouraged.
 - c. The center may only have their snapping hand(s) down.
 - d. The only player on the LOS not required to be in a 2-point stance is the center.
 5. The distance between the guard and center may not exceed three feet (1 yard) but may be closer.
 6. Offensive Linemen
 - a. The three offensive linemen must identify themselves on each play by raising their hands as they break the huddle and approach the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Once identified as an offensive linemen, players may not shift to another position.
 - c. All three offensive linemen are ineligible for first touch on a pass.
 - d. A guard who is uncovered by an end is ineligible for a first touch on pass.
 7. The quarterback-center exchange may be direct, pistol or shotgun.
 8. Quarterback sneaks are prohibited in all situations because the defense is not allowed to have players aligned over the center or center-guard A gap.
 9. The quarterback can run the ball in all plays except for a sneak. **NO QB SNEAKS up the middle.**
 10. At least two different quarterbacks must be used each half; position time as quarterback must be balanced.
 11. No trips formation is allowed” Trips are defined as any three players outside the guard-to-guard box.
 12. Motion is allowed as long as at the snap, not outside the 3 interior linemen box.
- E. Defensive Adjustments:
1. Two defensive linemen heads-up to outside eye of the two guards; no one over the center.
 2. Defensive linemen must be in a two-point stance.
 3. Defensive linemen over the guards must be aligned in a head up or outside shade position.
 4. Players in an outside shade must always have one foot aligned inside the stance of the opposing guards.
 5. The Defensive linemen’s first movement is to play the outside gap, cannot stunt into the “A” gap. No predetermined A gap stunts.
 6. LB or Corner can come down over a tight end.
 7. Free Safety 10 yards back directly over the ball.
 8. Defensive lineman is free to read and react to the ball in pursuit after contact with the guard.
 9. The defense must have one player at least 10 yards from the ball.
 10. The remaining four players are four yards off the line deployed at coach’s discretion – ball inside the 5 yard line – defenders feet can be on the goal line. Only 2 two defensive linemen rush.
 11. **NO blitzes are allowed.** Players within the tackle box at the snap can penetrate upon the snap. Linebackers, safeties and cornerbacks (both on the line and at depth) can flow to the ball naturally after the handoff is made, but predetermining penetration to a specific gap is illegal.
 - a. The box includes offensive players who line up within two yards of the ball and on the line of scrimmage along with the defensive players lined up directly over them.
 - b. On pass plays, anyone outside of the box on the snap cannot rush the quarterback and must remain behind the line of scrimmage in pass coverage.
 - c. Coaches are encouraged to be creative with their formations but not use “the box” to delay defensive penetration.
 - d. NOTE: The restriction on blitzing is intended to encourage skill development within the passing game and allow young players to execute a successful handoff with limited penetration.
 - e. The penalty for blitzing any player other than the defensive lineman will be a 10 yard penalty.
 12. If the ball is inside of the 4-yard line, the four non-linemen, non-deep players may align on the goal line.
 13. Hurry up offenses are NOT permitted.

SECTION 12 - 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. Actions by athletes, coaches, parents, or fans that conflict with the behavior standards of the Diocese of Cleveland CYO may be assessed consequences as outlined in Bylaw 10, even when the persons involved were not ejected, asked to leave, removed, or addressed at the time of the event.
- C. Athletes, coaches, parents, and fans who have been ejected, asked to leave, or removed by Officials or CYO personnel must depart immediately. If they refuse to leave the premises immediately, one week is added to their suspension. Their suspension begins the next day, with no option to appeal. There may be additional consequences and disciplinary actions for those individuals as stated below and in Bylaw 10.
- D. Anyone besides the coach or athlete on the team that enters the court or field of play is immediately suspended for one week and may be suspended for a longer time as determined by CYO Administration.
- E. Athletes who are ejected, asked to leave, or removed from an athletic event are automatically prohibited from attending any practices or CYO games for seven days including sanctioned events. They may not be on the premises of the next CYO scheduled game of any grade and may not attend or participate in any sanctioned event games during the seven-day period.
- F. Coaches who are ejected, asked to leave, or removed from an athletic event are automatically prohibited from attending any practice or CYO games for fourteen days including sanctioned events. They may not attend or be on the premises of the next two CYO scheduled games of any grade and may not attend any sanctioned event games during the fourteen-day period.
- G. Parents or fans who are ejected, asked to leave, or removed from an athletic event are automatically prohibited from attending any practices or CYO games for twenty-one days including sanctioned events. They may not attend or be on the premises of the next three CYO scheduled games of any grade and may not attend any sanctioned event games during the twenty-one-day period.
- H. Athletes, coaches, parents, or fans who are ejected, asked to leave, or removed from an event for a second time are not permitted to attend any competitions for the remainder of the season, including tournaments.
- I. Coaches ejected, asked to leave, or removed from an event for the second time in the same season will immediately surrender their coach's credential to the Site Director or Member Administration.



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

SECTION 13 - PENALTIES

| 5 Yard Penalties | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Offside | A player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped |
| False Start | A players 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 |
| Flags out of position & shirts need to be tucked in. Defense needs a clear view to grasp of runner's flags. | Shirts always tucked in 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 |
| 10-yard Penalties | |
| Illegal Screening | The player uses physical attempts to gain yardage by obstructing the path of their opponent; moving hands forward |
| 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 |
| 15-yard Penalties and just cause for ejection | |
| Tackling | |
| 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 |
| Spiking Ball after touchdown | Throwing the ball into the ground after a touchdown. (celebratory) |

(July 14, 2025)

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